

## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 1 – Planning Gary’s Shelter

“What are you doing?”

“Breathing, it’s getting hard.”

“I know what you mean, I had a nosebleed today.”

“And...”

“It quit. Heard from Clarence?”

“Not in a coon’s age.”

“Watch the language, Ronald.”

“Oh, I didn’t realize you took it that way.”

“Some of my best friends are Methodists.”

“Huh?”

“Just repeating something I read.”

“You still writing that crap you call survivalist fiction?”

“Beats the hell out of watching the news on TV. After the coverage of Katrina and Rita, I’m convinced that you have to flunk kindergarten to become a reporter. I’m worried, I preferred to watch Geraldo.”

“Want to go to a meeting?”

“No. So I suppose you’re going to tell me that I need to go, huh?”

“It’s good for the newcomers to see people with time.”

“I’ll translate that, who suckered you into being a secretary again?”

“Well...”

“Even Nancy Reagan knew enough to just say no.”

“Nancy Reagan was a drunk who needed to go to meetings.”

“How do you know? The reason I called was to volunteer to go to the meeting. When is it?”

“Noon, Saturday.”

“Non-smoking?”

“Of course.”

“Why didn’t you get a smoking meeting?”

“They didn’t ask me to take one of those.”

“It’s getting so I can’t afford to live anymore. What are you doing about drugs?”

“I have some drug coverage through my former employer. If it’s not covered, I go without.”

“Did you take out your pool and put in a shelter yet?”

“I was waiting for you to put one in.”

“Don’t hold your breath.”

“Are we back to that again? I told you, breathing, it’s getting hard.”

“I’ve got to go, I’m getting another nosebleed. See you Saturday.”

“Ciao.”

“Arrivederci, idiot.”

“With a capital I.”

◦

“Who was that?”

“Ron.”

“What did you talk about?”

“If you wanted to know you should have listened in. We talked about a lot of things. Spheres and cylinders.”

“What about spheres and cylinders?”

“A sphere is stronger than a cylinder. Most tanks are a sphere cut in half with a cylinder in between.”

“Why is that important?”

“I want to build a really strong shelter and we were discussing shapes, with the cylinder being second choice.”

“You were talking to him about going to the meeting.”

“That too, Saturday at noon. It’s 4 miles away so he’s picking me up at 11:15.”

“What kind of ice cream do you want?”

“Frozen ice cream?”

“What flavor, Spumoni, chocolate or vanilla?”

“Yes, who cares?”

“How big of a shelter?”

“Room enough for Ron and me.”

“That big?”

“Mumble-mumble-mumble-mumble-mumble-mumble-mumble.” (That’s the pot calling the kettle black.)

“What did you say? You mumbled.”

“Nothing, I mumble a lot. We could double the size and make room for you or Linda. Hush now, my program is on.”

“Commander in Chief?”

“Shows you just how duplicitous those SOBs on Capitol Hill are. Hey, did I tell you I downloaded the Combat Lifesaver’s Training Manual?”

“Why did you do that?”

“I had some free space on my hard disc drive. Now I know why they have diazepam in the Combat Lifesaver’s field kits.”

“Why do they?”

“If you get a shot of nerve gas, you give 3 injections of atropine and the Pam-2 followed by an injection of diazepam, it’s an anticonvulsant.”

“What do you do if they’re bleeding?”

“Give them Ringer’s.”

“Do you know how to start an IV?”

“Very carefully?”

“Do you know how to do CPR?”

“Only on blondes with big chests.”

◦

“Hey, Gar-Bear, what are you doing?”

“Digging a hole to put my shelter in.”

“Using a shovel? That’s going to take a while.”

“I figure that by the time I have the hole dug, I’ll be able to afford a shelter.”

“When will that be?”

“In the year 2525, if man is still alive, if woman can survive, they may find the money to build a shelter.”

“How’s it going?”

“Good. I dig a couple of shovels of dirt, take a break for a cup of coffee and a cigarette and then start in again.”

“How far have you gotten?”

“Two packs.”

“Do you need help?”

“Sure.”

“I’ll come over and supervise.”

◦

“You really are digging a hole.”

“I told you I was.”

“You should call Clarence to help; he worked for the County and is an expert at leaning on a shovel.”

“I called him last and he hasn’t called back. Was that a pacemaker they installed the last time you were in the hospital?”

“Nah, it was one of those defibrillators.”

“They recalled some of those.”

“I heard. The doctor will call if mine needs to be replaced. Do you have any idea how much the operation costs?”

“A lot?”

“He redid his house.”

“Hang on a minute; I have to shovel more dirt.”

“That didn’t take long.”

“I’m disabled; I wouldn’t want to tax my heart.”

“They have trouble in LA.”

“That’s why I moved to Palmdale in 1987, what’s changed?”

“You’d better stick to the digging, Gar-Bear, the trouble is headed here.”

“Ronald McDonald, we’ve known that for years. The folks leave LA to get away from the gang problems and bring their gangster children with them.”

“Gary.”

“Clarence. I didn’t know you knew where I lived.”

“Hi Ron.”

“Hey, Clarence how are you feeling?”

“I’ve got an ache in my shoulder, gastritis and can’t get my sugar regulated.”

“The usual, huh?”

“How are you feeling?”

“I’m about worn out supervising Gary dig his hole.”

“What you putting in, Gary? A swimming pool?”

“A bomb shelter, Clarence, the gangs are moving in from LA.”

“You going put up barbed wire?”

“Maybe after I get the shelter in.”

“It will be a while, Clarence. Gary’s only 2 packs of Kool’s into the project.”

“I’m almost done, once I get the hole outlined they coming in and to dig the dirt. I was just outlining where I wanted them to dig.”

“Why didn’t you just put in stakes?”

“I didn’t have any.”

“How deep will the hole be?”

“24’. I’m going to put in a section of used 12’ culvert.”

“Where’s the entrance going to be?”

“Haven’t figured that out, Clarence, I hate to climb ladders.”

“Maybe you should build a ramp so you can get your wheelchair down into the shelter.”

“The grade of an incline is its vertical rise, in feet, per every 100 horizontal feet traversed, so a grade of 100% is a 45° angle. My chair can handle a 9° slope, what’s that in terms of percent of grade?”

“15.8%.”

“How do you know?”

“The percent of grade is the tangent of 9° multiplied by 100.”

“Huh?”

“So I can build a ramp that rises ~15’ in 100’, right?”

“Yep.”

“I have to come up 22 feet, the ramp would have to be 146’ long.”

“Sounds to me like you’re going to be running in circles just getting down to the shelter.”

“Figure grade level at the bottom is across one end. I have a rise of 3.6’ in the first 24’ section and then a platform followed by a rise of 1.8’ in the next 12’ and then a platform and a run of 27’ with a rise of 4.05. Coming back across for 15’ raises me another 2.25, how high have I gotten?”

“You’re halfway there, Gar-Bear, 11.7’, keep going.”

“Ok, the next section is 30’ with a rise of 4.5’ followed by an 18’ section with a rise of 2.7’ followed by a 33’ section with a rise of 4.95’. Where am I now?”

“About 2’ off the ground, 23.85’.”

“Hmm, I guess that last section can be shorter. Let me fire up the old calculator. Now we’ll have to figure out how much concrete it will take.”

“Have them bring a portable batch plant.”

“Nah 146’ long x 4” thick by 3’ wide is only 146ft<sup>2</sup> or about 5½ yards.”

“You forgot the grade level slab at one end and the overhead.”

“You’re right Clarence, you should have been a contractor. Figure a 10’ grade level slab and we need 156ft<sup>2</sup> or 5.8 yards, doubled equals a shade over 11.5 yards. How much is concrete?”

“\$65 a yard.”

“I’d better get 12, which would be \$780.”

“What are you going to use to support the overheads?”

“Let’s see, 146’ long x 6’ high x 4” thick x 2 walls, right?”

“If you say so. You don’t have to calculate it, it’s double the amount of ramp, then doubled for 2 walls.”

“Sixty yards of concrete for a ramp? That’s \$3,900! Maybe I can build a ladder and get a winch to lower the wheelchair.”

“How much is the culvert costing you?”

“Nothing. But it will cost \$200 to get it transported and another \$300 for a crane to put it in place.”

“Is the crane going to lower it into the hole?”

“Darn I forgot to calculate the cost of the hole. That’s about \$4,500, to dig it. Then I need about 42 yards of crushed rock to fill the shelter hole up to the midline.”

“Gary that’s 5 grand and the culvert isn’t even in the ground.”

“Well, I have to coat the outside with tar and paint the inside before I put it in the ground.”

“How are you going to finish the ends?”

“Sharon Packer and Paul Seyfried at Utah Shelter Systems recommend  $\frac{3}{8}$ ” steel plate.”

“How much plate will it take?”

“226 ft<sup>2</sup> to cover both ends. You know what, I’m taking out a second mortgage and buying one from them, installed.”

“I heard they had a 6 month waiting period.”

“Who told you that?”

“You did.”

“A complete shelter includes shelter body, painting with rust inhibitor on end plates, primer coat inside shelter body, one 48 in. diameter entrance, one 36 in. diameter entrance, two hardened blast doors, two six inch diameter steel air vent stubs welded in place, two lengths six inch diameter air vents to grade level, two ladders, complete floor system with removable center panels, five full shelter lengths of unistrut, 20 unistrut hangers, ac & dc wiring system, four 55 gallon water barrels, chemical toilet, and a 50 person ANDAIR VA 150 chem/bio air filtration unit.”

“How much does it cost?”

“A 10’ x 50’ is \$58,350 plus transportation and installation. If I went with a 12’ x 50’ shelter, I’d have room for you guys. Want to rent a room for a couple of weeks?”

“How much is the rent?”



“\$60,000 divided by 14. Call it \$4,300 per person per day. I’ll throw in the beans and rice.”

“Are you going to pay yourself for you and your family?”

“Out of the right pocket into the left. Of course I’ll probably buy some extra equipment.”

“Like what?”

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“The usual, radiation meters, dosimeters, rifles and ammo. And don’t forget the beans and rice. I’m not going to supply gun safes, what the state doesn’t know won’t hurt me.”  
Say, I have some good news and some bad news, what do you want to hear first?”

“Tell me the good news.”

“I transferred all of my email addresses to my new hard disc drive.”

“Good, what is the bad news?”

“I found the Special Forces Medical Handbook online, but my clearance level for Army Knowledge Online doesn’t allow me to access the pdf copy of the manual. But that’s not all bad, I found it and 13 other Army medical texts on a CD for only \$15.”

“That’s good.”

“Yeah, now I can save you.”

“Wait a minute, that’s bad.”

“Why?”

“I can just see myself waking up to find you performing CPR on me.”

“At least I’m not a blonde.”

“I know. That’s the problem.”

(Sometimes, I don’t get any respect. And to think I offered to let them stay in my shelter for only \$4,300 per person per day. For that, they can bring their own beans and rice.)

“Ronald, you’re so ugly, you’d scare a mud fence.”

“Huh?”

"I'd better borrow \$50,000, I'll need to put in a generator and a tank of fuel. I can get a smaller piece of culvert and build a separate shelter for it."

"You'd better borrow \$60,000."

"Why?"

"Because you're forgetting something."

"What am I forgetting?"

"Radios."

"You're right, I need a TS-2000, a SSB CB base station and one of those business radios that we can tune to the frequencies Chris uses on the walkie-talkies I bought. I have the owner's manual for the TS-2000 on my computer."

"They don't make the Washington anymore. Get a Galaxy DX2547 AM/SSB CB Base Radio."

"I'd love to have a Starduster, but they quit making them."

"Get a Solarcon IMAX 2000 Base Antenna with the radial kit, it's a  $\frac{5}{8}$  wave antenna. If you must get business radios, just buy the antennas Motorola sells."

"I used to have my antenna on my roof."

"Get a US Tower MA-Series crank-up Tubular Tower MA-850MDP, its 85' tall and you can raise and lower it from the shelter with the RMC-1000 remote control."

"That tower costs \$6 grand!"

"True but you don't need a rotator so you can use the cheaper base. Plus you can add some standoff arms and only use a single mast."

"I'm going for \$70,000. I'm sure you'll think of something else that I missed. I might just as well not be able to pay a \$1,100 payment as a \$575 payment."

## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 2 – Gary's Shelter

"How much did you borrow?"

"\$75,000, I needed cigarettes, too."

"I see you got the tower."

"Got the radios too. Can't you see all of the antennas?"

"How are you going to get your wheelchair in and out?"

"I got the optional winch. I told them I wanted a wench, but they didn't have one. I also got a basket so we can raise and lower the pets."

"Want to go to the Movies?"

"Which movie?"

"*Good Night, and Good Luck.*"

"Wait, I know that one, Edward R. Morrow. I can remember listening to him on the radio."

"Did you ever watch *See It Now?*"

"I can't remember, I was a kid and not into anything worth watching. Probably, I used to watch *The Twentieth Century.*"

"That came out the year before *See It Now* went off the air."

"Then maybe I didn't. I sure liked him; I think they broke the mold after he quit broadcasting."

"They made a movie titled *Good Night, and Good Luck* starring George Clooney."

"He doesn't much look like Morrow."

"Maybe that's why he played Fred Friendly and another actor played Morrow."

"Who played Joe McCarthy?"

"Joe McCarthy."

"Yeah, Joe McCarthy. You remember the junior Senator from Wisconsin."

“Joe McCarthy.”

“Right, who played him?”

“Joe McCarthy.”

“Joe McCarthy is dead, he couldn't have played himself.”

“They use films. McCarthy died in '57 so at least Morrow outlived him. He also did *Person to Person*.”

*"This instrument can teach, it can illuminate; yes, and it can even inspire, but it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise it is merely wires and lights in a box."*

*"No one can terrorize a whole nation, unless we are all his accomplices."*

“Hey, George, listen up!”

“Was he?”

“Was who what?”

“Was Fred Friendly?”

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Chesty Puller was George S. Patton's cousin. Figures, doesn't it? “Lieut. Gen. Lewis Burwell Puller was the scion of an old and respected, but not wealthy, Virginia family. Like his distant cousin, George Patton, he grew up on tales of the martial prowess of his ancestors who fought in the Civil War.” The family was proud of their Confederate officers who had been killed during the War of Northern Aggression, that dark page in American history. Everyone recognizes the name Tommy Franks, but what about Fred Franks? He lost a leg in Nam and stumped his way to Basra during the 1st Gulf War in charge of the VII Corps in the highly successful "Hail Mary" maneuver against fourteen Iraqi divisions.

I learned that 19 men have earned double Medal of Honors. On April 5, 2005, Bush gave Army Sergeant First Class Paul Ray Smith the Medal of Honor (posthumously) for actions he took on April 4, 2003. This was the first Medal of Honor awarded to anyone for action in Iraq or the Persian Gulf. The most recent previous recipients were Gary Gordon and Randy Shughart in Somalia.

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Meanwhile they brought in the digger and dug this huge hole in my backyard. It went from my east fence to the slab my shed sits on. At least getting a loan and buying a completed shelter, I wouldn't have to tar and feather it myself. As I stood and contemplated that 24' deep hole, it occurred to me that I'd forgotten about a water supply. Palmdale treats its water in order to avoid people getting the whatever. Lice? I had gone to bottled water for a number of years, a good plan, and then replaced the bottled water with a reverse osmosis filter, a bad plan. The filter works fine but it's slower than molasses.

I set up a search on my computer to find the link in one of my nearly 50 stories where I wrote about those plastic water tanks. Between the shed and the planter, I had room to put in a fuel tank and a water tank, buried, of course. One squirrel had said he had 2 generators, a 4kw and an 11kw and that he rarely used the 11kw. I was thinking of something more on the order of the 1Mw when it occurred to me that with natural/LP gas prices rising and diesel being about \$3.40 a gallon my appetite was bigger than my pocketbook. I settled for 3rd best, Generac, and went shopping at TSC in Bakersfield. You do know that generators aren't all created equal. What generates electricity in Nevada is illegal in California. It was cheaper to buy the Generac Guardian Industrial/Commercial Portable generator than the same sized unit as a Generac Emergency Automatic Home Standby Generators – \$2,395 v. \$3,499. Then I realized that the smaller units would do, they put out 100 amps and cost \$2,296 v. \$2,895.

I looked closer. One, I could get the Generac stuff cheaper at another place. Two, looking still closer, I discovered they all had 3,600rpm engines. You could get a 1,800rpm engine for a premium price. I said screw it and bought an Onan RS15000, expensive at half the price. I'd need anywhere from 1.2 to 2.4gph of propane.

“Hey.”

“Hay is the first stage of horsesh...”

“Then I got it right. Tell me about propane tanks.”

“How much propane do you need?”

“Not sure, anywhere from 412 to 824 gallons for a 2 week period.”

“That's a lot of gas.”

“I know all about gas. Let's talk about propane.”

“If I talked to the people I know at AmeriGas, I might be able to get them to lease you a 1,000 gallon tank.”

“Once I get water, we're good to go, I got an Onan RS15000.”

“Should you have waited until they installed the shelter?”

“Nah, I’ve got it all figured out. We’ll put the propane and water behind the shed and the generator in a little room off the access to the shelter. That way we can service it.”

“How big of a water tank are you putting in?”

“Since I was only planning on the 6 of us, it would be 6 gallons a day or about 84 gallons. Knowing how things work in the real world, maybe I’d better go for a 1,700-gallon cistern. I can put a gray water holding tank under the floor of the shelter and pump it to the sewer. The shelter comes with a chemical toilet.”

“So how are you going to hook it all up?”

“So it doesn’t leak. Say, be sure to bring your elephant gun.”

“Why?”

“We more likely to get trampled by a herd of stampeding elephants than to ever need the shelter.”

“If that’s the case, why did you put it in?”

“For a while. But now that it’s going in, you can almost count on some sort of disaster.”

“Why?”

“I have to justify the expense.”

◦

“Did you get a rifle yet?”

“Yep.”

“What did you get?”

“A 7.62x51mm semi-automatic rifle.”

“What are its distinguishing characteristics?”

“I got 20 of the 20 round magazines to go with it and Derek is sending it to me in pieces by UPS.”

“Will you be able to reassemble it?”

“I have the owner’s manual...”

“On your computer, I know. What don’t you have on your computer?”

“Pictures of naked women.”

“Why not?”

“Sports Illustrated wanted too much for a subscription.”

“Do you have ammo for your rifle?”

“Nah, I thought I use it like a baseball bat and hit rocks at them. Of course I do, I bought it from Eric the Ammoman.”

“Sandy sells ammo just as cheap.”

“Support your local gun store? I don’t need to; she’s sold you 23 guns. Like I said, don’t forget your elephant gun, we’ll use it to shoot the tanks.”

“Are you planning on going to Barstow when TSHTF?”

“Nah, I already have a .22.”

“What else do you have?”

“A Masonic Bible, a Catholic Bible and a Book of Mormon.”

“Planning on reading while we down in the hole?”

“No, I keep them with my insurance papers. I read the Bible in college and I can tell you how it ends, God wins.”

“Spoiler!”

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“That flashhider is illegal.”

“Don’t worry about it, so are the magazines and so is the ammo I bought.”

“Why?”

“Armor piercing incendiary.”

“Did you buy a handgun?”

"I bought 2, both .45s, a Colt Commander and a Beretta Stampede. As soon as I get a scabbard for Salina, I'll be all set."

"Salina?"

"My wheelchair. Sandy had a Winchester .45 Colt rifle."

"Did you buy it?"

"I didn't have much choice after I drooled on it."

"Did you buy ammo for it too?"

"I thought I already explained."

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"Gary! How are you today?"

"Clarence! Damned if I know. I've only been up 3 hours, I'm not awake yet."

"Did they install the shelter yet?"

"Nope, but it's on the way. Once I get everything done, I have about 5,655ft<sup>3</sup> of dirt I have to get hauled off. That's the volume of the shelter and it's almost 210 yards of dirt. I figured that rather than reseed the soil above the shelter, I'd plant a garden."

"What are you going to grow?"

"Watermelons."

"You got some poke ribs in your shelter?"

"Yeah, but no chitterlings. Us white boys don't eat that stuff."

"What about greens?"

"The golf course is on 40th street east a half mile north of Palmdale Boulevard. Say do you suppose Utah Shelter Systems would give me a discount if I got a write up in the Antelope Valley Press about putting in one of their shelters?"

"They might, but then everyone in town would know you have a shelter."

"Can you believe a 6 month waiting list? Somebody must be scared."



“Besides you, you mean.”

“I’m not scared; I have my Nazi .32auto, 14 cans of Folgers coffee, 20 cartons of Kool’s, 25 pounds of rice and 18 pounds of beans.”

“Gary, you crack me up sometimes. What’s the plan?”

“When George gets on the TV on the EAS and says that it’s the end of the world, come here. The number of troops killed in Iraq stands at 1,953. Don’t forget your checkbook.”

“What about my sister?”

“She’s family rate, she can come.”

“Watermelon?”

“Unless you’d rather have musk melons. I’m going for acorn squash; Sharon won’t buy it at the store.”

“Why not?”

“She doesn’t like it and I don’t drive. Costco ran out of Folgers coffee, just like I thought they would. I warned everyone!”

“What are you mumbling about now?”

“My crystal ball? That’s what happens when you get old and your memory occasionally works. Besides, I’m a wiz on the net.”

“Do you want to go to a meeting?”

“Why? Are the p-u-king stories any different now than they were in 1995? Besides, I already went 4 times this year. I haven’t wanted a drink in over an hour.”

“Are you sure you aren’t on a dry drunk?”

“Can’t be, I turned it over.”

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“Did you bring your elephant gun?”

“I did, and all the ammo I had.”

“How much is that?”

“Sixty rounds, how many tanks were you planning on shooting? The cheaper brands are \$2 a round. I see they filled your hole in.”

“Oh man, you can’t believe it, it’s huge.”

“Can I bring Kevin?”

“You have the elephant gun, who am I to say no? I replaced the chemical toilet with a regular toilet and a wastewater holding tank with a sewage pump. According to their website, you could change out the chemical toilet in 2-3 days. No thanks, partner, I prefer to flush. If we get nuked, I don’t think I want to go outside for a couple of weeks.”

“Did you get the propane tank?”

“Believe it or not, everything works.”

“When is the disaster going to happen?”

“Whenever George says it is.”

“What does he know?”

“How to get out of going to Vietnam?”

“Did the stuff you ordered from Texas come?”

“Why, do you want to see if your watch clicks?”

“What are all of the antennas on the mast?”

“I have the Motorola antenna, a CB antenna, a Diamond DJ-130J and a HF antenna.”

“You didn’t get an antenna for the VHF and UHF bands?”

“I’ll use the Diamond, it’s rated at 200w. I have an antenna tuner. You know we could get those NOAA radios and get warnings when things were going to happen.”

“I figured that they were a poor investment, Gar-Bear. We’re too far from the coast to worry about storm warnings, we don’t get hurricanes or tornados and we’ll know about an earthquake before they do.”

“Among Clarence, you and me, I figure we have about 2,000 movies. What say we pick out a few for the shelter? We can put on a movie and eat popcorn while the world ends.”

“Yellow or white popcorn?”

“Does it matter? Bring what you like.”

“I have some of that popcorn from the Shell station.”

“Good, it has kernels as big as your fist. What kind of soda do you want?”

“I prefer iced tea.”

“Good, I have some Farmer’s Brothers Tea bags. They’re only about 10 years old. We can make all the tea you want.”

“That ought to be good.”

“It wasn’t when it was fresh.”

“Why do you want so much C2 and Coke Classic?”

“Because Amy prefers Pepsi?”

“Were you planning on inviting Amy to stay in the shelter?”

“Un-un. That’s why I figure she’ll be there. She can argue with Kevin. Do you know why I know she’ll graduate from law school?”

“Why?”

“Because she’d argue with the Pope over him being Catholic. Anytime anyone doesn’t do it the way she thinks it should be done, she argues with them. Then, she calls her friends up on the phone and argues with them.”

“Do you like anyone?”

“Do I get to choose?”

“Amy is just a chip of the old block.”

“I don’t argue.”

“Since when?”

“Since I learned to pout.”

◦

“600-yards...”

“What is 600-yards?”

“That’s the distance from the front my house to the front of the housing tract times 3.”

“Clarence said you were going to put in barbed wire.”

“I ran out of money when I bought gas for Sharon’s car.”

“What kind of disaster are you contemplating?”

“Long Valley won’t blow, some guys just bought the Mammoth Mountain Ski resort. I doubt that a Volcano will erupt in the middle of the La Brea Tar Pits. But, the San Andreas Fault is long overdue”

“An earthquake?”

“Maybe not, I already wrote that story.”

“How about a thermonuclear war?”

“I did that one about 20 times.”

“Why?”

“Well, I’ll tell you Ronald. Of all the things that could happen, a nuclear war and an earthquake are the most likely so far as California are concerned. I’m not so sure China would attack, that would really screw up their Wal-Mart contract. North Korea only has 7 nukes. You know what I think the avian flu, H5N1, seems to be the topic of the moment. They identified the disease in Canada as Legionnaire’s disease. The Prez seems to be convinced we’re going to have a pandemic.”

“What do you think?”

“I think we’d better get a case of masks.”

“What kind of masks?”

“Whatever you can afford. How about a case of masks and a case of gloves?”

“Want me to get hand cleanser while I’m at it?”

“Yeah, get something cheap that’s mostly alcohol. Don’t believe that crap that it kills 99% of ordinary germs. There’s nothing ordinary about H5N1.” (It’s not a bacteria, it’s a virus!)

## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 3 – Earthquake

*...in India and Pakistan; the US wasn't involved, for a change. It was those guys over there that do all of the offshore technical support and their neighbors.*

“Would you hold for a minute, please?”

“If you'll answer one question first. Where are you?”

“Bombay.”

“Never mind, I'll figure it out myself, it will be quicker.”

What's his name had the technical service contract for 50 different US firms. It took about 15 minutes for him to get to the right computer screen. Then he had you try all of the things you already tried. After an hour, you always gave up and fixed it yourself. Can you tell me how a guy in Bombay, India can tell what's wrong with the SBC switch in Los Angeles? Actually, he can't; he says they have a problem that will be fixed, when it's fixed. I had to call halfway around the world to learn that? I knew that before I called, so I learned to not call. I finally figured out how they pay reporters, by the adjective. It can't be a fire; it's a stupendous fire with smoke billowing twice as high as the build is tall. One glance suggested that the building would burn to the ground. It took the reporters 17 minutes to suggest the same thing.

Some guy stole a tow truck in LA and ran over some people. It was on the 11 O'clock news. Here's this gal standing under a streetlight explaining the accident that happened 6 hours earlier. Finally she explained that they'd restored power. I never would have guessed... Then they interviewed a guy with the fire department who explained how they would handle the fire. He paused so they could ask questions. The first question out of the reporter's mouth was, “How do you plan to fight the fire?”

“We're going to pour gas on it so it will be over sooner,” was what I wanted to say. I can't repeat what Sharon said.

o

We talked about having a disaster drill, but decided it wasn't worth the effort. If a disaster happened, everyone would grab their checkbooks and guns and boogie over to my house. I finally had my new rifle, the Springfield Armory M1A assembled. Your M1A rifle is one of the finest military-type rifles ever built. Very little maintenance is needed to keep your M1A in superb condition. Disassembly should be kept to an absolute minimum. This is especially true with National Match and Super Match rifles, whose actions are glass bedded in their stocks. Unnecessary removal promotes wear, sloppy fit, inaccuracy and defeats the purpose of the bedding. Please do not field strip your match rifle unless it is absolutely necessary. I guess it was a good thing I didn't buy one of those. I

read all of the things I wasn't supposed to do and wondered if I dare shoot the gun. It sort of looked like a grown up Mini-14.

Anyway, I found the rifle scabbard and got it attached to Salina. I couldn't raise the left arm of the chair, but I didn't care. Getting a holster and belt seemed to be a problem. I'd waited 30 days and gone back to Sandy's. She had the Stampede (Uberti) with the 7½" barrel in by that time. I wrapped up a belt in an envelope and mailed it to Kirkpatrick Leather Company in Laredo. I told them I had 2 Berretta Stampedes, one with a 7½" barrel for a right side draw and a 4¾" model for the crossdraw. I ordered it in plain black with the Conchos. They called me and I gave them my debit card number and they said I'd have the leather in a week.

One revolver weighed 36.8oz empty and the other 38.4oz empty. Then you added 12 bullets plus the weight of the holsters and you were really loaded down. After you put cartridges in the cartridge belt, you almost needed suspenders or a bigger butt than I have. Always had trouble wearing cowboy leather because my waist was as big as the bottom end. There was a solution, Sam Browne to the rescue, I added suspenders and called them shoulder straps. Ron snickered until I gave him the evil eye.

o

George never came on the TV and I figured that was the end of it. On his Saturday morning address to the nation, he mentioned what was happening and then put in a plug for extending the troops in Iraq for another year. I told Ron that Derek was sending me the rifle in pieces, but it was Mary, Derek was Over There. I sure hoped that didn't mean Derek would be gone another year.

"They have flu shots at Albertson's, \$25. \$50 for a pneumonia shot." (A year after I got the pneumonia shot, I got pneumonia.)

"We had pneumonia shots and we can get the flu shot from Dr. J cheaper."

"Gas is \$4.25 a gallon."

"Like I said, when are we going to Albertson's?"

I had a 55-gallon drum that I was filling with gasoline, 5 gallons at a time. I figured that 55-gallons of gas would get us from here to there, wherever that was. Sharon had a light touch on the gas and she could get about 25mpg. With a full tank and 55 spare gallons, we could get about 1,675 miles from Palmdale. We got the flu shot and I got the flu. They said that this vaccine had 2 A stains and one other strain, so we could hope.

There are many different subtypes of type A flu viruses. These subtypes differ because of certain proteins on the surface of the flu A virus (hemagglutinin [HA] and neuraminidase [NA] proteins). There are 16 different HA subtypes and 9 different NA subtypes of flu A viruses. Many different combinations of HA and NA proteins are possible. Each

combination is a different subtype. All subtypes of flu A viruses can be found in birds. However, when we talk about “bird flu” viruses, we are referring to those flu A subtypes that continue to occur mainly in birds. They do not usually infect humans, even though we know they can do so.

When we talk about “human flu viruses” we are referring to those subtypes that occur widely in humans. There are only three known subtypes of human flu viruses (H1N1, H1N2, and H3N2); it is likely that some genetic parts of current human flu A viruses came from birds originally. Flu A viruses are constantly changing, and they might adapt over time to infect and spread among humans. There currently is no vaccine to protect humans against the H5N1 virus that is being seen in Asia. However, vaccine development efforts are under way. Research studies to test a vaccine to protect humans against H5N1 virus began in April 2005.

“Did you get the Flu shot?”

“That’s why I have the flu, I think my immune system is shot.”

“Let me give you a word of advice – don’t call anyone for tech support.”

“Maybe the Chinese haven’t nuked us yet, but they’re going to, they’re building up their military.”

“Maybe I’ll paint an X on the shelter. Where’s Clarence?”

“He was right behind me, but he drives slow.”

“How do you like my new rifle?”

“I figured you’d get the fancy one.”

“Didn’t see any point, my eyes aren’t all that good. We won’t tell Geraldo. Did you see those guys in the New York subway running around with M-16s?”

“What was that all about?”

“The FBI says that terrorists are going to blow up the subways and Homeland Security doesn’t believe it. Apparently the Mayor wasn’t taking any chances. They’re still on Orange and have been since 9/11.”

“So when they get the WTC replaced, they’ll go to Red?”

“I’m not so sure; al Qaeda is running out of money. The number 2 guy wrote the guy in Iraq and asked for donations. Ayman al-Zawahiri in a letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi claimed that funding sources have been seriously disrupted.”

“Their names sound alike. It’s confusing.”

“What’s confusing?”

“Hi Clarence, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.”

“Them is those Arabs dudes, right?”

“Yeah, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri is number the #2 guy in al Qaeda and formerly the head of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad paramilitary organization. He may be bin Laden’s doctor. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is a Sunni Jordanian insurgent and the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq. Al-Zarqawi’s real name is believed to be Ahmad Fadeel al-Nazal al-Khalayleh. This whole bunch is nuts. Like other cults, such as Jim Jones’ People’s Temple, the Heavens Gate sect or the Order of the Solar Temple, members are persuaded to give up their own lives for the promise of a paradise beyond. This technique was used a millennium ago by Hassan I Sabbah, a mystic, alchemist and master terrorist on whom bin Laden probably models himself. Hassan’s Order of Assassins was made up of suicide killers with poisoned daggers who believed that their leader had the key to the gates of Heaven.

The Assassins transformed the act of murder into a system directed largely against Seljuk Muslim rulers that had been persecuting their sect. They were meticulous in killing the targeted individual, seeking to do so without any additional casualties and innocent loss of life, although they were careful to cultivate their terrifying reputation by slaying their victims in public, often in mosques. Typically they approached using a disguise; their weapon of choice a dagger, rejecting poison, bows and other weapons that allowed the attacker to escape. However, under no circumstances did they commit suicide, preferring to be killed by their captors.”

“You could have stopped at ‘yeah’.”

“Where’s that chit eating grin you always wear?”

“I must have left it at home. Did you hear the President’s radio address”

“Heard about it, I’m just afraid he’s going to extend Derek.”

“He’s over there? Where?”

“I can’t tell you that, but it’s about 100 clicks east of Baghdad.”

“Why can’t you tell me?”

“He didn’t really say. You don’t suppose that we’re getting ready to invade Iran, do you?”



“Probably, they’re a member of the Axis of Evil. Bush said:

*Our goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September the 11th. But we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens. Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom.*

*States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.”*

“That was 2,000 American soldiers ago.”

“So what’s it going to be, an earthquake, a nuclear war or that avian flu?”

“Did you have your flu shot?”

“You bet. It gave me the flu.”

“I had it too.”

“I must be immune.”

“Ronald they were talking about you on the Frugal’s website and I quote:

*Palmdale Girl about The Three Amigos: Which one do you like?*

*Other Palmdale Girl: I like the one that's not so smart.*

*Palmdale Girl: Which one is that?*

*Palmdale Girl: I was thinking later, you could kiss me on the veranda.*

*Amigo #?: Lips would be fine.”*

“The first one could be me, but the second one has to be Clarence, I’ll kiss them anywhere.”

“Do you know any Australians?”

“Just Crocodile Dundee, why?”

“I’m supposed to include an Aussie in this story.”

“You mean one of those guys that says, mate, bloke and stuff like that?”

“Yeah.”

“Call up Paul Hogan and invite him over. I’d like to get a close up look at Linda Kozlowski. They live in a renovated Victorian farmhouse near Santa Barbara.”

“I found Aussie slang dictionaries and they call us seppo’s.”

“What does that mean?”

“Ask Chili. What kind of hand cleaner did you get?”

“Walgreen’s store brand, it is 124 proof. The label says it will kill 99.9% of all germs.”

◦

Are viruses and bacteria the same? It's easy to mix these up since compared to us, both are VERY SMALL. But... Bacteria, given the proper nutrients, can grow and reproduce on their own, but... Viruses cannot “live” or reproduce without getting inside some living cell, whether it's a plant, animal, or bacteria. And compared to viruses, bacteria are huge. A bacterium is 2 micrometers across while a virus is only 20 nanometers across, 100 times smaller. A nanometer is 1/1000 of a micrometer. Bacteria can get viruses. An alcohol molecule is 0.96 picometers in length, and a picometer is 1/1000 of a nanometer. You don't have to know anything, if you know where to look.

◦

I guess the story has an Aussie in it now. He couldn't stay; he and Linda were going over to Fess Parker's vineyard. He said to come by sometime and he'd throw a shrimp on the barbie. Daniel Boone aka Davy Crockett is alive and well and producing booze. At the time he was famous in France for his Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone roles, French distributors found they had to rename him – on posters, in TV programmers...etc. – for the French audience/ Public, into "Fier" Parker. One must know that "fesse(s)", in French, means, "buttocks, bottom", whereas "fier" means "proud"; a more becoming name for someone embodying American "Heroes"... Only the French could turn an American hero into an ass.

“124 proof, do you mean 62% alcohol?”

“Yeah, ethanol.”

“What else is in it?”

“Stuff so you wouldn't dare drink it.”

“That’s ok, I have a bottle of Scope (60 proof). Anyway, I don’t drink (gave it up for guzzling). Clarence did you get a rifle too?”

“I have a shotgun.”

“Good for you. Did you get a rifle too?”

“I have a .38.”

“Good for you. Did you get a rifle too?”

“No.”

“Why not, you didn’t have any problem buying an arsenal in The Ark other than being a cheapskate?”

“I told you that the M1A was just too expensive. It was then and it is now.”

“I got mine in another state.”

“Where?”

“Arkansas. Mary bought mine and shipped it to me in 3 pieces. She put the stock group in one box, the barreled receiver group in a second box and the trigger-housing group and magazines in a third box. Sent it UPS ground.”

“Did it really cost less?”

“No, but I got the regular flashhider and 20 of the 20-round magazines.”

“What did it run?”

“A little over \$1,200 plus the magazines. Cheaper than the Santa Fe Gun Galleria, that’s for sure, and even a little cheaper than Sandy.”

“Can we shoot a virus with a rifle? No we can’t, so I don’t see why I need one.”

“So you’re going to stick with your 12-gauge with the 26” barrel, the .22 rifle and a .38 revolver? Clarence you won’t last a minute when the MZBs show up. The advantage to the M1A is that it’s almost legal the way I have mine configured. As long as I don’t show off the 20-round magazines, no one will give me any trouble, I hope. But if you want to pay a hundred extra dollars, yours can be totally legal with that crappy looking muzzle brake and 10-round magazines.”

“Come on Clarence, maybe we can get a discount if we buy two.”

“That’s right and I can get more magazines from Arkansas.”

“I was going to have Jennifer get me one. What do you say, Clarence?”

“Oh, all right.”

◦

And that’s how the 3 of us came to each have a Loaded model M1A rifle, purchased through straw women in Arkansas. Ron bought the ball ammo from the Ammoman and we swapped some rounds. I put a piece of tape on the API magazines. It was beginning to seem like a waste of time and money, no one nuked the US and we hadn’t invaded Iran, yet. To top it off, both Clarence and I got the regular flu after we’d gotten flu shots. Butthole hadn’t gotten sick, but he did seem to be moving slower. I would too if I were carrying an elephant gun around.

We had to settle for a smaller freezer in the shelter, a 14 ft<sup>3</sup>. It was about 28” on a side and just barely went in. Our rule of thumb was you could put anything you wanted in the freezer, but it had to be enough to feed 20 people. Ron had 5, Clarence 3 without his kids and I had 12 counting my kids who would turn up the minute TSHTF. If we had to somehow squeeze in Clarence’s kids, we’d make room and slice the meat a lot thinner. That would make the total 27. I measured and we had about 500 ft<sup>2</sup>, a little on the snug side. I didn’t know about Chris and Patti because Chris said I was nuts. Still, it was racing season and the radios had new batteries and were ready to go.

Having seen the pictures of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I have to wonder if anyone would win a war between India and Pakistan. Neither country had mastered fusion and their bombs and warheads were about 20kt, max. The problem was that George had finally decided to invade Iran. If you’ve watch the E-Ring last week, you know that Dennis Hopper doesn’t think the US would invade Iran because of the terrain. That actress who plays the Sergeant graduated from Brown University. It appears that they aren’t going to continue the show, it’s shown as ‘complete’ at IMDb.com, but the monster shows are doing fine. I guess heroes aren’t popular these days. We have to go oh and ah over some darned little lizard.

Although used occasionally in later experimental devices, the Little Boy design was used only once as a weapon because of the extreme danger of a misfire. A simple crash could drive the "bullet" into the "target" and release lethal radiation doses or even a full nuclear detonation. The danger of misfire was even greater over water. Even if the force of a crash did not set the bomb off, if water entered the fail safe system, it would be shorted out, possibly leading to a detonation of the bomb. But, you knew that, right?

◦

We were in a hurry to get everything done, but we were getting older and moving slower. Our hearts were in it, including Ron and Clarence’s worn out and repaired hearts,

but the bodies didn't cooperate. There were also those ladders and we concluded that we all use the pet basket, one at a time. The only problem with that was the war would be over before we all made it in the shelter. I suspected that when the announcement came on TV, Chris and Patti, Dick, Dave and Lance would show up with their families looking for a room for a couple of weeks. That would only be 8 additional people, we could do it. The air filter was rated at 50 people and we'd still have 10ft<sup>2</sup> apiece with 50. No habla, so the rest of the neighbors were in trouble.

Lance had been a Special Forces officer in Vietnam; he'd be good to have on our side. Dave was a machinist and even had his own lathe in his garage. He could build most anything we could design. Dick worked for the gas company and was a ham operator. Chris didn't own any guns and I figured that if any of them did, it would be Dick and Lance although I didn't think that either of them hunted.

Clarence thought the rifle was awful loud and I told him to buy a muffler. That old fart did it too. However, he wouldn't say where he came by it. Now we had the pattern for the adapter and the muffler and Dave had the lathe. Clarence let Dave dismantle it and draw patterns with all of the measurements. He said if the world ever ended, he'd think about the mufflers but he could machine the adapters now so we could install them on our rifles. I suspected when he got bored, he'd probably make the mufflers, just to see if he could. Surefire claims they use a special metal in the baffles. Dave said he'd figure it out and have all of the metal supplies he needed.

For the next week or two, I noticed the light on in Dave's garage late at night. He never mentioned what he was doing and I didn't ask. I assumed he was machining parts to repair one of his 20+ motorcycles. He has the biggest collection of dirt bikes I've ever seen, at least 20 and possibly as many as 30. He has a shed full and there isn't much room in his garage for more. Dick's garage is filled with lumber of every size, shape and description. He has a table saw, a radial arm saw, drill press and lots of carpentry equipment. I never asked why, I'm not that nosy. Chris's garage looks like an auto repair shop because of his constant building and repairing his race car. He has the Mig welder, sheet metal brakes, grinders and all that stuff.

Amongst those 3 neighbors, we had the capability of building about anything we wanted. Dick was sort of a jack-of-all-trades, installing gas piping for the gas company. I hadn't planned it that way, but this was, in some ways, the perfect blue-collar neighborhood. We even had our own majority, probably mostly illegals. I tried to make friends with the couple who bought Dan and Dawn's house, but they preferred to hang with the wetbacks in the house between Chris and me. Common language, I suppose. The Country of México obviously thought that California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas we still part of that country, they had more of their population north of the border than south. Ours had started out the typical multi-ethnic California neighborhood in 1987.

The way these things went, eventually the neighborhoods went Hispanic or black and ours was Hispanic. The Hispanics couldn't afford the houses at the prices they were going for so they sublet. The typical house in our neighborhood housed 3 families. The

house between Chris and me seemed to be more of an apartment house with a constantly changing group of people. Those nasty dogs seemed to belong to the owners. I'm explaining, not complaining, one of these days, we'd have our disaster and it might be open season. What do you call 750 dead Méxicans? A good start. (Old lawyer joke about 750 dead lawyers on the bottom of the ocean.)

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"Did you know that if you only fire a single shot people usually can't tell which direction it came from?"

"You can't hear Clarence's rifle at 100 yards, either."

"I wouldn't mind having one of those mufflers, I have the adapter installed."

"Maybe Clarence will loan you his."

"What about the guy across the street that made us the adapters?"

"He said he'd only build us mufflers if it was the end of the world."

"And our invading Iran doesn't qualify? Every Muslim in the world hates the US."

"There's nothing new about that. We speak English and they're still mad at Lawrence."

"Lawrence of Arabia? He was a queer SOB. No one would have ever heard of him if it weren't for Lowell Thomas." (True, he and his 4 brothers were illegitimate, Thomas made his exploits famous and his homosexuality was controversial.) Lawrence was a giant of a man, 5'5 and 130-pounds. Peter O'Toole is 6'3.

The National Earthquake Information Center put the quake at  $M_w$  7.6, which it considers "major." The Pakistani Meteorological Department put the magnitude at 7.5, and Japan's Meteorological Agency put it at 7.8. In January 2001, some 30,000 people died in a magnitude 7.7 quake in western India.

Friday, Gov. George Pataki proposed making New York's boating laws as strict as federal law. I don't see why, they're all drowned now. His legislation would mandate alcohol tests any time a boat is involved in a fatal accident. The captain wasn't drunk.

## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 4 – Tick, Tick

Tick, the clock ticked one. The US was in Iran now.

Dave brought over the mufflers to see if they fit on the rifles. I told him that he'd better leave them with me, they were illegal and I didn't want him to get in trouble. He sort of gave me a funny look and handed them over. I checked and they were complete. Whether or not he'd been able to identify the super-secret aerospace metal that Surefire used in their suppressors would have to wait until we fired a few rounds through the mufflers and checked the rear baffle. But late at night, I could go out and shoot the rifle and no one would be any the wiser. The baffles held up just fine, at least mine did. I didn't know if Ron and Clarence had done any night practice, but as quiet as the rifle was, they could have.

"Dave said you had him make something illegal for you."

"Not intentionally, he said he wouldn't make them until the end of the world. When I found out he went ahead and made them, I took them off his hands so he wasn't in possession of anything illegal."

"He showed them to Lance and Lance needed a couple too."

"I didn't know whether or not Lance had any guns."

"He fought in the war."

"I know. We talked about it, as much as anyone who was in Vietnam was willing to talk about it. Which is to say that he didn't have a lot to say."

"If I had been older, I probably would have been a war protester."

"Why? Go ahead and protest the war in Iraq and Iran, my kid is over there."

"If I do, will you let me in your shelter?"

"No fringing way."

"Are Ron and Clarence as Conservative as you are?"

"Ron is more conservative and Clarence is a little more liberal."

"And, you're in the middle?"

"I guess."

"God help us."

“God helps those that help themselves.”

“What does that mean?”

“I guess when the end of the world comes, we’ll help ourselves.”

“To what?”

“Anything that isn’t nailed down.”

◦

How many times have we heard the familiar passage “God helps those who help themselves?” We hear it quite frequently, don’t we? In order to fully understand that passage let us turn to it. You all know where it is located don’t you? Maybe it is in the book of Hezekiah or possibly Phillips 66:1. No, that’s not right. Look as we may we won’t find that passage in the Bible. Although often quoted and stated this phrase doesn’t come from the Bible nor is it even Biblical in origin.

In fact this quotation has come down to us from Greek mythology. Specifically it comes to us from one of Aesop’s fables, of the 6th century BC. Let’s read this fable entitled “Hercules and the Waggoner.” “A Waggoner was once driving a heavy load along a very muddy way. At last he came to a part of the road where the wheels sank halfway into the mire, and the more the horses pulled, the deeper sank the wheels. So the Waggoner threw down his whip, and knelt down and prayed to Hercules the Strong.

‘O Hercules, help me in this my hour of distress,’ quoth he. But Hercules appeared to him, and said: ‘Tut, man, don’t sprawl there. Get up and put your shoulder to the wheel. The gods help them that help themselves’.”

◦

I didn’t know whether FT knew about the cliques in Methodist Churches. He didn’t want me to be offended so he called and I explained about the clique that exists in every Methodist Church, generally, the Country Club Set who sort of look down their noses at we mere mortals. It isn’t limited to the Methodists either. For a while I attended the First Church of the Open Bible in Des Moines. A friend of my dad had died and a friend of theirs was a widower. Howard’s widow wanted to marry the friend. They were excommunicated from the Church for getting married. They should change their name to the First Church of the Open Hypocrites. All of the people involved are long dead. When that happened, I found another Church. Once you join the Methodist Church, they carry you on their rolls until someone tells them you’re dead or you officially resign. The clique to end all cliques is Grace United Methodist Church in Des Moines, Iowa. You rub elbows with Iowa Supreme Court Judges, high ranking public officials and it goes way beyond the Country Club Set.



When you're a member of a particular Methodist congregation, that Church has to pay dues up the line as a result. Grace made me transfer my membership when I wanted Damon baptized. I didn't transfer my membership to another Methodist Church until 1997. They got to pay my dues from 1971 until 1997. They should have left me alone, I rarely get mad, but I always get even. Some claim that getting even only hurts you. Don't you believe it, that's only true if you're getting even is an active, not a passive act and there is more than one way to skin a cat. If the theater is on fire and it's filled with those folks from south of the border, they probably wouldn't understand if you yelled 'Fire' when you saw it. The best course might be to get up and exit quietly.

Tick, North Korea tested a nuclear weapon and the US moved the Pacific Fleet to the southern Sea of Japan. That made the Chinese happy and they attacked Taiwan. So the US sent half of the fleet to the East China Sea.

*My Fellow Americans,*

*Recent developments in the western Pacific have forced me to deploy all of our Pacific Naval assets. As I speak, half of our carrier forces are moving to the East China Sea to aid Taiwan in its time of need. During the summer of 2004 the Navy surged some aircraft carriers from their homeports ... to generate as many as seven of 12 carriers on station ... for Coalition operations. The ability to push that kind of military capability to the four corners of the world is quite remarkable and recent. Several years ago, the Navy could deploy only two. Through this series of deployments, surge operations and exercises, the Navy will demonstrate and exercise a new approach to operations and maintenance.*

*In an ongoing effort to improve our capacity to deploy the fleet, changes were made to our operations. We currently have 8 Carrier Strike Groups deployed, 2 will be ready in 30 days and the remaining 2 in 90 days or less. I cannot and will not remove the 2 Carrier Strike Groups from the Middle East as they are supporting our ongoing effort on the War on Terror. I have ordered the remaining carriers to accelerate their plans to deploy and my advisers tell me that we'll have 2 additional groups at sea within 2 weeks and the other 2 within 45 days. There remains no easy way to increase the number of carriers deployed with the Pacific Fleet. The 2 groups deploying in the near term will replace those in the Middle East and when relieved, they will deploy to the Pacific.*

*The readiness status of our forces has been advanced one step. Accordingly, the Threat Level will be advanced one step. These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.*

*We shall prevail in Iraq and Iran. If called upon to prevail against the North Koreans and the Chinese, we shall. The Axis of Evil will be destroyed, once and for all time. This is*

*not a war against Muslims; it is a war against all who would destroy our way of life. We must prevail, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.*

*God Bless America.*

“He needs a new speech writer, that one paragraph was Thomas Paine and he even quoted his Axis of Evil Speech.”

“Does this qualify as World War III?”

“I’m not sure, Clarence, do you want to vote? I vote yes.”

“I don’t think it counts until we fire the first shot in anger in the Far East.”

“One yes and one no. What do you think Clarence?”

“I say maybe.”

“Then you think it’s the Continuing War on Terror until we get nuked?”

“That’s right.”

“Clarence, I have good news and bad news, what do you want to hear first?”

“What’s the good news?”

“We have more weapons.”

“What’s the bad news?”

“Nobody wins a thermonuclear war. Didn’t you ever watch *War Games*? Even the computer figured it out. We have lived through the most serious moment when a nuclear world war could have broken out. Obviously, in that case, the United States would have sustained huge losses, but the Soviet Union and the whole socialist camp would have also suffered greatly. As far as your country is concerned, it would be difficult to say even in general terms what this would have meant for them. In the first place, your country would have been burned in the fire of war. There’s no doubt that your people would have fought courageously or that they would have died heroically. But we are not struggling against imperialism in order to die, but to take advantage of all our possibilities, to lose less in the struggle and win more to overcome and achieve the victory of communism.”

“Who said that?”

“Nikita Khrushchev in a letter to Fidel Castro.”

“The Cuban Missile Crisis?”

“Right after. Castro wrote him a letter complaining about the Soviet Union caving in to Kennedy. The launch of a Lockheed-built Polaris A1 Fleet Ballistic Missile was the first in history from a submerged submarine, the USS George Washington (SSBN 598). It occurred July 20, 1960, off Cape Canaveral, Florida, and within three hours a second Polaris test missile was launched. On November 15, 1960, the submarine and its 16 Polaris A1s began the first patrol. The first successful submerged launch of the Polaris A2 came from the USS Ethan Allen (SSBN-608) on 23 October 1961 off the Florida coast. On 26 June 1962, the POLARIS A2 began its initial operational patrol when the USS Ethan Allen departed Charleston, South Carolina. I told you before that Kennedy didn't give Khrushchev anything. We replaced our Jupiter's with Polaris missiles.”

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Trident II D-5 is the sixth generation member of the US Navy's Fleet Ballistic Missile (FBM) program, which started in 1956. Systems have included the Polaris (A1), Polaris (A2), Polaris (A3), Poseidon (C3), and Trident I (C4). The first deployment of Trident II was in 1990 on the USS Tennessee (SSBN 734). While Trident I was designed to the same dimensions as the Poseidon missile it replaced, Trident II is a little larger.

The Trident II D-5 is a three-stage, solid propellant, inertially guided FBM with a range of more than 4,000 nautical miles (4,600 statute miles or 7,360 km) Trident II is more sophisticated with a significantly greater payload capability. All three stages of the Trident II are made of lighter, stronger, stiffer graphite epoxy, whose integrated structure mean considerable weight savings. The missile's range is increased by the aerospike, a telescoping outward extension that reduces frontal drag by about 50 percent. Trident II is fired by the pressure of expanding gas in the launch tube. When the missile attains sufficient distance from the submarine, the first stage motor ignites, the aerospike extends and the boost stage begins. Within about two minutes, after the third stage motor kicks in, the missile is traveling in excess of 20,000 feet (6,096 meters) per second.

The ten Trident submarines in the Atlantic fleet were initially equipped with the D-5 Trident II missile. The eight submarines in the Pacific were initially equipped with the C-4 Trident I missile. In 1996 the Navy started to back fit the eight submarines in the Pacific to carry the D-5 missile.

“If one or two misfire, who cares? We have 14 SSBNs, each equipped with 24 missiles and 8 warheads per missile, 2,688 warheads. We have 21 B-2s each capable of carrying 16 B-61s or B-83s, 336 bombs. Finally we have the Minuteman III and Peacekeeper Missiles, anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 warheads. I make it a total of 5,024 weapons and I know we have about 8,000. We can wipe out most of the face of the planet. On top of that, we have the B-52s, the B-1Bs and the fighter aircraft that can deliver B-61s. In terms of sheer power, we'd win. But, who would want to live in a world in the aftermath?”

“If that’s the case, why did you buy a shelter?”

“It seemed like a good thing to do at the time.”

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“I’m tired of teaching people things in my stories. I think I should just write one for the fun of it and do very little research.”

“Make up stuff as you go?”

“I already do that. That’s the advantage my pal FT has, he writes science fiction and who can say that we won’t have those things that far in the future?”

“Where did Bush make that speech from?”

“It could have been anywhere; I heard that there were several fancy, secret bunkers around the US. All we saw was a blue background. You can bet your butt it wasn’t from the White House.”

“So do we go on alert?”

“If they raised the DEFCON level up one level, it means that we’re at DEFCON 3. The Threat Level is Red in New York and at Orange in most places around the US. I’m wondering if 3 Carrier Strike Groups will be enough against the Chinese.”

“I’ve been thinking about those threat levels. Gary, have we ever been below yellow?”

“Not that I know of, why?”

“It means that we effectively only have 3 threat levels, yellow, orange and red. Blue and green don’t count because we’ve never experienced them. At yellow, DHS says we are to:

Complete recommended steps at levels green and blue.

Ensure disaster supply kit is stocked and ready.

Check telephone numbers in family emergency plan and update as necessary.

Develop alternate routes to/from work or school and practice them.

Continue to be alert for suspicious activity and report it to authorities.

“At orange, we are to:

Complete recommended steps at lower levels.

Exercise caution when traveling, pay attention to travel advisories.

Review your family emergency plan and make sure all family members know what to do.

Be Patient. Expect some delays, baggage searches and restrictions at public buildings. Check on neighbors or others that might need assistance in an emergency.

“And at red, they want us to:

Complete all recommended actions at lower levels.  
Listen to local emergency management officials.  
Stay tuned to TV or radio for current information/instructions.  
Be prepared to shelter-in-place or evacuate, as instructed.  
Expect traffic delays and restrictions.  
Provide volunteer services only as requested.  
Contact your school/business to determine status of workday.

“Do I have that right?”

“If that’s what you have written on that piece of paper it is.”

“What is DEFCON III?”

“Clarence, it’s complex, let me explain.

DEFCON 5 Normal peacetime readiness  
DEFCON 4 Normal, increased intelligence and strengthened security measures  
DEFCON 3 Increase in force readiness above normal readiness  
DEFCON 2 Further Increase in force readiness, but less than maximum readiness  
DEFCON 1 Maximum force readiness.

EMERGCNONS are national level reactions in response to ICBM (missiles in the air) attack. By definition, other forces go to DEFCON 1 during an EMERGCNONS. There are 2 levels, Clarence:

DEFENSE EMERGENCY: Major attack upon US forces overseas, or allied forces in any area, and is confirmed either by the commander of a unified or specified command or higher authority or an overt attack of any type is made upon the United States and is confirmed by the commander of a unified or specified command or higher authority.

AIR DEFENSE EMERGENCY: Air defense emergency is an emergency condition, declared by the Commander in Chief, North American Aerospace Defense Command. It indicates that attack upon the continental United States, Canada, or US installations in Greenland by hostile aircraft or missiles is considered probable, is imminent, or is taking place.”

“So when we hear there is an Air Defense Emergency, we’re screwed?”

“Don’t duck and cover, come here. That’s why I have a shelter. Now, if you want, you can store all or some of your weapons in the cabinet in the shelter. I’ll give both of you a

key to the shelter entrance and the gun cabinet I have down there. If I were in your place, I'd keep several changes of clothes in my trunk and all of my medicines in a bag that I could grab and run."

"What are we going to do if something happens in the middle of the night?"

"I know that Ron needs his ugly rest, so I'll stay up every night until 5am, 2 hours later than I usually do. Amy is up by then and will wake Sharon and me up if anything happens. She never goes anywhere without her cell phone."

"What about you? What if you've no more than gotten to sleep and the balloon goes up?"

"I'll get up, call you guys, go to the shelter and go back to bed. Given a choice, I rather sleep through the end of the world."

"I just know something bad is going to happen soon. Ron and Gary, if I don't make it, it's been something knowing you."

"Not, 'nice' knowing you?"

"Once in a while."

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China is qualitatively and quantitatively improving its strategic missile force. This could provide a credible, survivable nuclear deterrent and counterstrike capability. It is fielding more survivable missiles capable of targeting India, Russia, virtually all of the United States, and the Asia-Pacific Theater as far south as Australia and New Zealand. Beijing maintains a small strategic arsenal. Its stated nuclear weapons doctrine remains one of "no first use."

China's future strategic force will likely comprise enhanced silo-based CSS-4 ICBMs (currently deployed), solid-fueled, road-mobile DF-31 (initial operational capability 2005-06) and DF-31A ICBMs (IOC 2007-09), and sea-based JL-2 SLBMs (IOC 2008-10). China will also maintain a force of nuclear-armed CSS-5 MRBMs for regional contingencies.

China currently deploys approximately twenty silo-based, liquid-propellant CSS-4 ICBMs, which constitute its primary nuclear deterrent. The Second Artillery also maintains approximately twenty liquid-fueled, more limited-range CSS-3 ICBMs to sustain its regional nuclear deterrent. The Second Artillery will likely keep this older missile in service until it is replaced by the more survivable, road-mobile DF-31. China supplements the aged CSS-2s with solid propellant, road-mobile CSS-5 MRBMs.

The introduction of the road-mobile DF-31-series ICBMs will supplement China's silo-based strategic force. The mobility of the new DF-31-class missiles will enable these systems to operate over a larger area, making them more difficult to locate and neutralize. The introduction of a new generation of SLBMs on China's new ballistic-missile submarine will provide an additional survivable nuclear option. Finally, replacement of the older, silo-based CSS-4 Mod 1 with the longer range CSS-4 Mod 2, coupled with the ongoing migration to mobile, solid-fueled systems will enhance the operational capabilities and survivability of China's strategic missile force.

On March 14, 2005, China's legislature, the National People's Congress, passed the "anti-secession law." The law's passage followed months of speculation by outside observers over its contents and a simultaneous lobbying effort on the part of Chinese officials to cast the law in benign terms, while closely guarding the draft of the text. The law itself is broken into ten articles that codify, or render as legal instruments, policies and statements applied by the Chinese government to the Taiwan question. Key elements are described below.

Article One establishes that the law was formulated for the purpose of "opposing and checking Taiwan's secession from China."

Article Two restates Beijing's "One China" definition – Taiwan is part of China – and that China "shall never allow" Taiwan to secede from China "under any name or by any means."

Article Three asserts that the Taiwan matter is part of China's internal affairs and is subject to "no interference by outside forces."

Article Four states that China's reunification is the "sacred duty" of "all Chinese people," including "Taiwan compatriots."

Article Five reiterates China's position that acceptance of "One China" is a necessary pre-condition for peaceful resolution. It does not refer to the "one country, two systems" model, but claims Taiwan would "practice systems different from those on the mainland."

Article Six enumerates the steps Beijing is willing to take to realize peaceful unification, such as expanding cross-Strait exchanges, including cultural, economic, educational, science and technology, health, and sports exchanges. It also refers to "other activities" conducive to peace and stability, but does not offer details.

Article Seven specifies the range of issues that would be subject to negotiation during cross-Strait consultations. The article states such negotiations would be on an "equal footing."

Article Eight states the State Council and CMC "shall decide on and execute" non-peaceful means to "protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity" if "secessionist

forces . . . cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China," if "major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession" occur, or if "possibilities for peaceful reunification" are exhausted.

Article Nine provides that during conflict, China will "exert its utmost" to protect lives, property, and rights of Taiwan civilians and foreign nationals on Taiwan, and the rights of Taiwan citizens in other parts of China.

Article Ten specifies that the law comes into force on the day of its proclamation.

Some PLA theorists are aware of the electromagnetic effects of using a high-altitude nuclear burst to generate high-altitude electromagnetic pulse (HEMP), and might consider using HEMP as an unconventional attack, believing the United States and other nations would not interpret it as a use of force and as crossing the nuclear threshold. This capability would most likely be used as part of a larger campaign to intimidate, if not decapitate, the Taiwan leadership. HEMP causes a substantial change in the ionization of the upper atmosphere, including the ionosphere and magnetosphere. These effects likely would result in the degradation of important war fighting capabilities, such as key communication links, radar transmissions, and the full spectrum of electro-optic sensors. Additional effects could include severe disruptions to civil electric/power and transportation. These effects cannot easily be localized to Taiwan and would likely affect the mainland, Japan, the Philippines, and commercial shipping and air routes in the region.

"I got that off of my computer, fellas. I had it in a file labeled China\_2005. It's a copy of The Military Power of the People's Republic of China – 2005. Those are some of the key points and if China believes that Taiwan will secede, they'll attack. They have the entire ocean between the mainland and Taiwan under a missile umbrella. Even if they don't attack this country directly, we're likely to see them using a series of HEMPs. Try and imagine this country without electricity. I went back and built a Faraday cage to protect the generator, just in case."

"A what?"

"Michael Faraday stated that the charge on a charged conductor resided only on its exterior, and had no influence on anything enclosed within it. To demonstrate this fact he built a room coated with metal foil, and allowed high-voltage discharges from an electrostatic generator to strike the outside of the room. He used an electroscope to show that there was no electric charge present on the inside of the room's walls. This shielding effect is used to eliminate electric fields, like EMPs, within a volume, for example to protect electronic equipment."

"How did you do that?"

"I lined the generator box on all six sides with sheet metal I got from Chris."

"But does it work?"



## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 5 – Tock

Tock, we were about to find out if it worked. The theory was simple. I'd connected all of the pieces of sheet metal with pieces of cooper grounding mesh, which I had connected to one of my grounding rods. The shelter that USS manufactured resisted EMP. For the next few days, I stayed up each night until 5am and slept until 1pm. I'm telling you, those people next door must have a motel, and people were going in and out all night. I looked and the light out front was white, not red. On the other hand, it was on all night, every night, I checked.

Chris's radios were in a metal case in a metal cabinet, his truck, and should be well protected on the off chance that EMP hit us. His generator was also mounted in the truck so it would likely survive too. Since I only had 2 comments, I was holding chapter 3 until I felt justified in posting chapter 4. That was my gimmick for posting chapters and ending stories. When the comments dropped, I dropped the story. I also read all of the comments hoping that when I got tired of a story or ran out of ideas, I could find an excuse to slide the cabins off into the canyon, like in Big John. I'd given up proofreading more than a couple of times because if I missed an error twice, I was sure someone else would find it and send me an email.

I really liked the 1am to 5am shift and could get a lot written if I didn't get too foggy in the head. If I didn't press when I got up, I didn't really wake up until 4pm. At which time I'd take my morning insulin injection and morning pills. I had to take those at least 20 minutes before I ate to protect my stomach. Ron had brought a 500-tablet bottle of Enteric Coated regular aspirin and Sharon bought me 400-tablets of the 81mg Enteric Coated stuff so I had a 3-year supply of aspirin. Plavix worked but costs \$4 a pill, about the price of a pack of smokes. Given a choice between Plavix and Kool's, Kool's won. I been dying since the day I was born so I wasn't worried about that. Then around 1am, I take my nighttime pills and would be sleepy by 5am.

I also noticed that there were a lot of sirens at night. You could tell if it was a fire truck from the diesel engine and that darned horn, but the cops and the ambulances all sounded the same. I rigged up my little Berkeley TV with its 3-4" screen so I could keep an eye on the late night news. I left the volume down so I didn't have to listen, how much CNN could a guy be expected to take? Unlike when I'd gotten sick in 2003, I was getting a full night sleep and my health was holding up just fine for an 80 year old man. Of course I wouldn't be 63 until my next birthday, but it didn't matter. We finally gotten me a wheelchair ramp for the front door and the patio door, but I decided to just leave the wheelchair in the house unless I could make it work with my computer/radio table. Ron bought a couple of the 8' folding tables and Clarence a few folding chairs that looked like they come from the Palmdale Group. I didn't ask.

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Aside from the one time we'd fired our M1As, we hadn't bother to go back to a range. I'd shot out the streetlight on the other side of 47th a couple of times, usually within a mag-

azine of ammo. I did it so I could learn the gun and get used to cleaning it and clearing any malfunctions. I had one magazine with 20 rounds all of the time and the other with ten. I had some stripper clips off the net and an adapter so I could probably load the other 19 in 5-10 minutes. I was debating buying one of those loaders they sell but they were some kind of plastic and I was getting a really bad attitude about plastic.

I got the M1A with the black fiberglass stock because it was cheaper and hopefully lighter. I also figured humidity wouldn't change the point of aim. I'd forgotten that the guy at Santa Fe Gun Galleria had told me they had several of the fiberglass stocks and I should buy the rifle with the walnut stock and he'd give me one. The only thing they ever gave away for free was instruction to the front door! I tried to buy a retractable baton and was at the register when he wanted to see my police ID. So I bought one off the net. In fact, I bought 3, one for each of us. If we missed with all of our shots, we could club them to death.

The Winchester Expandable Baton was available in 21", 24", 26", and 29" sizes in either a black zinc or electroless nickel (corrosion-resistant). Prices were \$102 for the baton and another \$36 for the case. Plus tax times 3. Baseball bats were much cheaper. Derek had claimed that we wouldn't want bayonets. After we put those Surefire adapters on the rifles, we checked it out. He was right and I started sharpening Rambo I. Derek had Rambo II and Rambo III would take a month of grinding to get the top sharp, a good project if we ended up in that shelter.

Sitting there writing at times, researching at others, keeping an eye on the motel next door and watching always for the EAS screen, the nights passed quickly and I managed to get Rambo one as sharp as it had ever been. When that was done, I borrowed a file from Chris and started in on Rambo III. That was some hard steel and it took a while to get the top to the point where I could start using the stone. I decided to look for a knife shop that offered sharpening services. Once they had the top sharp, I could take the stone and really get it sharp.

"I thought you were going to buy us some batons."

"I was until I saw the price, with a carrying case they're \$140 bucks apiece plus tax and shipping."

"You're working on 3, get 1 done?"

"Oh yeah, that was the easier of the two. It was close to being sharp on the top already. The only problem I know of carrying those knives is that California prohibits double edged blades."

"Seems that you're close on 3, too."

"Filed it down, and got it professionally sharpened. Now all I have to do is finish it off."

“Which one are you going to carry?”

“Until I get 3 sharp, 1.”

“And after?”

“That depends on whether my shoulder straps will support the weight and I can figure out how to draw it fast. One has the hollow handle like two and contains a survival kit.”

“How many knives do you have, Gary?”

“I gave Ron one with a 6” blade, if he still has it.”

“How about I give Clarence that knife and carry whichever one you don’t?”

“What kind of knife is it Gary?”

“I’ll get mine. It has a compass on top and a hollow handle with some survival equipment. Let’s see, Explorer Camo Wilderness. It would appear that you could sharpen about 2” on the top. I may sharpen this one up and carry 2 knives, one for everyday use and one for fighting. Ron I’ll give you 1 to use when I get 3 sharpened. In the meantime, Clarence can carry my spare Explorer.”

“What happened to your boot knife?”

“I sent it to Derek along with Rambo 2.”

“What are you going to do if Derek gets killed in Iraq or Iran?”

“Morn myself to death, just after I go off the wagon.”

“Getting drunk won’t bring him back.”

“The Army will bring him back or what’s left of him. He’s the best one of the 4, you know, a regular darned Patriot.”

“You’re not supposed to favor one child over another.”

“I’m ambivalent when it comes to Lorrie and we’ve been carrying Amy far too long. Damon is ok, but he’s so focused on his being bi-polar, he is essentially worthless to himself and others. Good boy, don’t get me wrong. Amy is the best educated of the lot and if she’d learn to listen and not argue so much, I could live with that too.”

“She’d never hurt you.”

“You’re right I keep a gun and a couple of knives on my computer table. Clarence, are you bringing your boys to the shelter?”

“If I can.”

“I figured that about 8 of the folks here in the tract will come too so we’re going to have 35 people in the shelter. That’s going to be tight, maybe on 14ft<sup>2</sup> per person. Assuming we even need to use it. I’m almost convinced that if the Chinese attack, they use HEMP and not bother with anything else. About the only circumstance that would require an extended stay in the shelter would be a hit on LA, Plant 42 or Diablo Canyon. Assuming we limit our water usage to 1 gallon per person per day, we have enough water for about 48 days.”

“What about that 2,401 hour scenario?”

“If you want to put in another 1,700-gallon cistern, go for it. The website is watertanks dot com and the 1,700 gallon cistern was about \$1,400. We get pretty close to 100 days if we rationed the water a little. We can technically move above ground when the radiation level is 104mR/hr.”

“Ron, I could go halves with you.”

“Gar-bear start digging.”

“Ronald McDonald, if we all dig, the hole might be finished by the time the tank arrives. We can get Dick to plumb in the water. My crystal ball seems to be vibrating in its stand.”

“Where is the company?”

“Windsor, California. It’s on 101 north of Santa Rosa.”

“Clarence, give me \$700 and I’ll go after the tank. Gary and you can get some help and dig the hole.”

“What’s the urgency?”

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“Those 2 Carrier Strike Groups left port this morning. If the Chinese are going to do anything, they’re going to do it within the next 2 weeks. I could be wrong, but I’m guessing that those Groups will steam at 35knots or about 40mph. They should make it to the Suez Canal. It’s about 3,850 from Norfolk to Gibraltar and 2,250 miles from Gibraltar to Port Said. That would be about 152.5 hours steaming time or a little over 6 days. Assuming the other two carriers depart when they reach Port Said, they can be in the East China Sea in less than a week; it’s only about 4,100 miles or 102.5 hours steaming

time. Whether they send the fresh ships or the others, two more of our carriers will be in the East China Sea in about 255 hours or about 10 and one half days. Call it 11 to be sure.”

“So we have what, 10 days to get ready?”

“If we’re lucky yes. If I were running this operation, I’d blockade the Straits of Malacca with a couple of I-class Los Angeles subs. China transports most of its oil through there. That would hurt them good. Wikipedia says a 688 class carries about 25 tube launched weapons.”

“What do they use?”

“The Mk-48 Mod 7 ADCAP. It might take 3 to put a tanker down quickly, but one should be enough to blow it up and start an uncontrollable fire. It’s pretty hard to fight when your oil supply is cut off.”

“They’d probably have some stored, don’t you think?”

“Some maybe, but they consume one heck of a lot of oil.”

“So do we, the price of gas topped \$5 a gallon in San Francisco.”

“When?”

“It was on the news last night.”

“The minute I heard that Bush’s approval rating had fallen to 19%, I turned the TV off. I’ll run the Berkeley in the office but I’m not watching any more news.”

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I lied of course; I still followed the news on the Internet. It was going to be close; there were more cases of H5N1 in Europe and Indonesia. Our two Carrier Strike Groups were in the mid-Atlantic pouring it on. I even felt the M5.6 earthquake they had near Wrightwood. There was plenty of news, all of it bad. I pinched myself to make sure I wasn’t dreaming.

Derek hadn’t told me where he was going, exactly. What he had said was that he wouldn’t be going where he first thought, the distance was the same but it would be in the direction they all prayed to. I translated that to mean he’d be 100 clicks east of Baghdad rather than 100 clicks north. I also couldn’t remember if he’d told me 100 clicks or 100 miles back when he first told me where he’d be. Once I looked on the world atlas, I located the entry ports from Iran and said, ‘bingo’. It made a difference because 100 clicks is only ~61 miles.

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US subs sank a super tanker in the Straits of Malacca, moving the conflict up a notch. The American CSGs were staying just outside of the protective missile umbrella the Chinese had installed to protect the ocean between the mainland and Taiwan. They called the place the Taiwan Strait and it connected the South China Sea to the East China Sea to the north. The area south of Taiwan was the Luzon Strait and the ocean to the east was the Philippine Sea. The island of Taiwan lay directly north of the Philippines.

The Chinese had been firing missiles on Taiwan for about a week, apparently trying to soften the island before attacking. Most of the missiles they had deployed could barely reach Taiwan and were intended, I presume, to only protect the Strait. They had a supply of larger missiles purchased from Russia with convention warheads and were using those against Taipei. That immediately made me think of the V2 missiles the Germans had used against the English in WW II.

China had a lot of the solid-fueled, road-mobile DF-31 missiles, which the DIA had said would have initial operational capability in 2005-06. That missile had a range of 8,000km with a 1mT warhead. When the intelligence agencies replaced Humint with Elint, they screwed the pooch. The Chinese had satellites of their own and were perfectly capable of tracking American and Russian satellites. Note the date on the following piece from sinodefence.com:

*China is currently upgrading all classes of its nuclear ballistic missiles, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Beijing intends this program to improve its nuclear deterrence by increasing the number of warheads that can target the United States and augmenting the nuclear force's operational capabilities for contingencies in East Asia. China has replaced all of its early variant DF-5 (CSS-4) ICBMs with the longer range CZ-5A. China has deployed a small number of the DF-31 (CSS-9) 8,000km-range, solid-fuel, road-mobile ballistic missile introduced in the 1990s, and is currently developing two follow-on versions: an ICBM version DF-31A with an extended range of 10,000km, and a solid-propellant submarine-launched ballistic missile the JL-2 (CSS-N-2). There is also evidence showing that China is developing the MIRV capability for the DF-31A and JL-2 to improve their strike capabilities.*

*At the same time, the PLA Second Artillery Corps is continuing to supplement its ageing inventory of liquid-propellant CZ-3 (CSS-2) intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBM) with the solid propellant, road-mobile DF-21 (CSS-5) medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM). The 7,000km-range DF-4 (CSS-3) was reported upgraded to 8,000~10,000km range under the name of CZ-1D (DF-4 copy) space launch vehicle project. The improved missile is said to have been deployed in "ready-to-launch" status in silos.*

*Early reports suggested that China may only has about 20 DF-4s, 25 DF-5s, and several (less than 10) DF-31s. However, some other sources indicated that by 2000 the PLA Second Artillery Corps could have deployed eight ICBM brigades, including three DF-5*

*brigades, three DF-4A brigades and two DF-31 brigades, each brigade with 12 ICBMs, giving the total number of ICBM in China's inventory 96.*

*Additionally, China is known to have deployed 12 single-warhead JL-1 submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) on a single Type 092 (Xia class) nuclear missile submarine (SSBN). China is also developing a newer JL-2 on the basis of the DF-31. The missile is intended to be carried by the Type 094 nuclear missile submarine (SSBN) currently under construction. The JL-2, which is believed to also have MIRV warheads, has an estimated range of 8,000km. This would allow the submarine to strike America and Europe from waters close to Chinese coasts. A Type 094 SSBN can carry up to 16 JL-2 missiles, with 48 to 96 MIRV warheads.*

*"However, some other sources indicated that by 2000 the PLA Second Artillery Corps could have deployed eight ICBM brigades..."*

The same people who generated the DODs report suggested that the range of 10,000-12,000km DF-31A ICBMs wouldn't be deployed until 2007-09 and sea-based JL-2 SLBMs wouldn't be deployed until 2008-10. No explanation was given for the report being withheld until July 2005. Were they afraid of endangering our relationship with China, as some had supposed? Or, were they rechecking their facts and learning that, if anything, the report understated the advances in the Chinese programs?

The WTC Commission said that that disaster was the fault of the intelligence agencies. Will they have a World War III Commission to try and learn why the Chinese kicked our butt? They were still arguing over whether or not to have a Katrina Commission to learn why a hurricane had devastated New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. I can save them millions, these things run in cycles and Louisiana didn't want the money spent on levees capable of protecting New Orleans against a Category 5 storm. They were scrambling to get up the \$61 million they stole from the feds. In one word: Politics.

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Does everyone become a cynic when they get older? I know that The Three Amigos did. If the truth dare be told, we were hoping to be gone before TSHTF but we forgot about God's sense of humor. It turned out that He was getting even for 90 combined years of our giving him the Bird. Nothing too dramatic, He was a loving God these days and would give us just a little taste to get our attention.

It was around 4:30am when the ground began to shake. I been there and done that before, it was an earthquake. My hat fell off my computer monitor and brushed me on the face. Everything was shaking so bad I couldn't continue to type. I didn't get on the phone; no one would sleep through this one. The phone rang.

"Gary, what are they saying on TV? Should we come there?"

"Good time for a practice drill Clarence, call your kids."

“How big was this one?”

“Honey, I don’t know, but were going to have a practice drill. Get Amy and start moving things to the shelter.”

The phone rang again.

“Gar-Bear, we’re on the way.”

The phone rang again.

“Daddy, what should we do?”

“Come here kid, we’re having a party. Everyone will be here. Bring plenty of diapers for Jeffrey.”

The last of them were just pulling in when the first aftershock hit. I was still sitting in my office guarding my computer when the screen popped up with:

“Emergency Action Notification Audio Message

*This is an Emergency Action Notification requested by the White House. All broadcast stations will follow activation procedures in the EAS Operating Handbook for a national level emergency. The President of the United States or his representative will shortly deliver a message over the Emergency Alert System.*

An earthquake is a local event, not a national emergency, what the hell was going on? A local disaster was only a national emergency if you lived in New Orleans. Bush came on TV.

*My Fellows Americans,*

*We have an Air Defense Emergency; missiles are inbound to the US. Take cover immediately.*

*God Bless America.*

But wait, an Air France flight was just arriving at Kennedy and there were several passengers aboard with colds. If the Chinese were the ones who sent the missiles, it was questionable whether or not they could reach New York or Washington, after all, they hadn’t deployed the DF-31A and wouldn’t until 2007-09. Right? Whoops! The Air France Flight diverted to Newark. We would have been better off if they had landed at Kennedy. The San Andreas let loose with *The Big One* just before the Chinese launched and the people aboard the Air France flight all had the avian flu. They landed safely in Newark. The Chinese only hit New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, Phoenix,



San Diego, Dallas, San Antonio, Detroit and Washington. They also detonated 4 HEMP warheads over the US, immediately wiping out all of the electrical generation capabilities and making 90% of the vehicles in the US inoperable. Without electricity, the US stock markets couldn't open and the President responded in kind, wiping every major Chinese city off the face of the planet. It only took ½ of the Peacekeepers.

There weren't enough replacement transformers in the world to get the lights back on anytime soon. We heard on the radio that the USGS had given a preliminary magnitude to the quake on the San Andreas,  $M_w$  8.2. I couldn't figure that one out. If the Chinese made a HEMP attack, why were any of the radio stations on the air? The TV was down and Wolf was probably out of a job. There is always some element of good that comes with the bad. I felt bad for Geraldo; Katrina had given him a new lease on life. We had to deal with the ground shaking every couple of hours plus radioactive fallout but didn't know about the avian flu, yet.

We voted and Chris's price of admission was changing the oil in the generator. After we were able to come out of our overcrowded hole in the ground, Dick would see about getting the gas back on and repair any broken plumbing. Lance would be in charge of security because he was the Green Beret. Dave would be busy keeping his lathe running manufacturing mufflers. They muffle the sound and don't totally silence the rifle, making muffler a more correct name.

It was becoming difficult to get upset about people dying, there had been so many since the turn of the century. I'll just mention the big ones: 9/11/01 – 2,986; 12/26/04 – 286,000; forget it; the list is too long. ~40,000 in India and Pakistan plus probably more than 1,000 on the Gulf Coast. If you search the web to find the number of people killed each year in auto accidents, all you get are 1,000 attorney's websites. The DOT says ~43,000 a year, 118 a day on average. The WTC was only a month's worth of highway deaths compressed into a very short time. The statistic is something like 1.46 deaths for every 100-million vehicle travel miles. We drove 29,452 x 100 million miles in 2004; no wonder gas is so high. SUV anyone?

Japan, experienced in dealing with quakes of its own, said it was sending relief workers and \$220,600 worth of goods such as blankets and tents. Added to the \$200,000 they pledged to the US after Katrina, they should be close to broke.

Al Qaeda has put job advertisements on the Internet asking for supporters to help put together its Web statements and video montages, an Arabic newspaper reported. The London-based Asharq al-Awsat said on its Web site this week that al Qaeda had "vacant positions" for video production and editing statements, footage and international media coverage about militants in Iraq, the Palestinian territories, Chechnya and other conflict zones where militants are active.

The paper said the Global Islamic Media Front, an al Qaeda-linked Web-based organization, would "follow up with members interested in joining and contact them via email."

The paper did not say how applicants should contact the Global Islamic Media Front. Looking for work? Consider al Qaeda...

"There radiation level isn't so bad, how about we go out for some air?"

"Getting tired of feeling like a sardine?"

"And smelling like one yes. Did you ever figure out why one radio station was on the air and nothing else was?"

"Magic? What do I know, I'm just tired smelly old man? What did the CD V-717 read?"

"50mR."

"We can all leave and air the place out. I'm sort of worried about that avian flu; regular flu shots won't protect you against it. And then, there's the matter of the aftershocks. Who knows if our houses are even standing?"

"I knew you should have put up that barbed wire, Gary."

"We'll use plan B and have Chris pull his truck and trailer across the front of the tract."

"What was plan A?"

"Homemade concertina around the housing tract, foxholes near the entrance, etc. Can't remember which story I dreamed that up in. Got in a rut and did it about half a dozen times. Then when we couldn't stay here, we'd pack up and head to the Underground City."

"Where's that?"

"Don't exactly know, north of Blythe somewhere. It was a civil defense shelter for a while."

We climbed the ladder and opened the blast door/hatch. The sun was shining is it was fairly warm for the time of day. Our house looked like someone had used it as the pins in a bowling alley, cracked in dozens of places, the patio cover down on the west end and most of the windows broken. I looked in the sliding glass door (broken) to see what kind of shape the kitchen was in. The false ceiling Sharon had put in had come down so I couldn't tell much. The place stunk, like someone had left food on the stove and it had rotted. We didn't have to worry about gas because of the earthquake valve and since the generator had run, I knew we didn't have electricity.

Chris and Patti went to check on their home as did Dick, Dave and Lance.

## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 6 – What a Mess

The light poles were all down so we'd have to clear the street before Ron and Clarence could leave to check on their homes. More of the houses in the neighborhood were down than were standing. Maybe this was what the outskirts of Hiroshima look like after they dropped the atom bomb. From what we could learn on the single radio frequency, the earthquake had extended from just north of San Bernardino all the way past Ft. Tejon and down to Grapevine. The same radio listed the cities that had been hit with nukes, 10 including Washington. Then to make matters worse, the HEMP attack had shut down everything electrical. There had only the briefest of hints that the avian flu might have made it to the US.

This was nothing like what I had imagined it would be. I didn't have a chain, but did have a towing strap and they could use that to move the downed light poles. I gave Ron and Clarence the CD V-715 and told them once we got the street cleared, it might be a good idea if they checked on their homes. They should, I suggested, travel together and maybe take along the boys to enhance their firepower. My shed must have slid 5-6' and it was off its slab, a problem that would require emptying the shed before several of us could push it back in place.

"Are we going to be able to stay in the house?"

"It doesn't look like it Sharon. It seems to me that one more aftershock will bring the whole thing down."

"What can we salvage?"

"We should empty out all of the bedrooms and then get your kitchen stove and both refrigerators. Then we can empty out the offices and salvage your quilting stuff and my computer and printers."

"What about the house?"

"I wouldn't bump into anything if I were you. Get David's boys to start helping move things. You did pay the earthquake insurance didn't you?"

"Of course I did."

"Good they can replace the house and the contents so we can sell it and get out of Palmdale. Ron, are you and Clarence ready to go?"

"The street's clear."

"You'd better wear those masks, you have no idea who or what you're going to run into."

"Right, MZBs with the avian flu."

“You never know. As many stories as I have written, I never expected this. Where the hell are the California National Guard and FEMA? They should have been here by now. While you’re out, why don’t you guys stop by Big 5 and see what you can find that we can use? We can use Coleman stoves, ice chests, guns and ammo and a lot of things. We can make some ice in the freezer in the shelter for the ice chests.”

“Gary, what do you fellas have for rifles, those look like M14s?”

“M1As, Lance, a semi-auto version of the same basic rifle. What do you have for guns?”

“I have an AR-15 and a couple of hundred rounds of ammo.”

“Hang on a second. Ron, see how much .223 you can get at Wal-Mart, Lance only has a couple of hundred rounds.”

“You’re going to loot?”

“No, we’re going to borrow. We survivalists prefer to think of it in term of strategic reallocation. Do you have magazines?”

“I have 7, the 30-round type that are illegal, plus the magazines the rifle originally came with.”

“How about a handgun or a shotgun?”

“I have a .357 magnum revolver.”

“Ammo?”

“One box.”

“I heard, Gar-Bear. Give me a list of Sharon and your prescriptions. If we’re going to break into Wal-Mart, we might as well make it worth it.”

“I thought that you didn’t read my stories.”

“I lied.”

o

The California National Guard could have been in Palmdale much sooner than this. They had those MOPP suits, the battledress over garments that had charcoal liners. I have to see if I could get my computer up and check the field manuals I had on CD-ROMs to what the criteria was for them entering an area with residual fallout.

“How is your house, Chris?”

“About the same as yours. We’re going to set up camp in the front yard.”

“What about Dick and Dave’s?”

“The 2-story homes didn’t fare so well. They can empty the garages but anything inside the homes is a casualty.”

“Lance’s house must have come down too.”

“Every 2-story house is down.”

“I saw the houses next door and wondered. Did your pickup make it through? Can you run your generator?”

“I only have about 5 gallons of gas.”

“I have a 55-gallon drum and you have whatever is in your gas tank. You can also take my lawn mower gas.”

When Ron and Clarence returned 3 hours later, it was a mixture of good and bad news. Clarence lived close to the Fault and his house was gone. Ron was about the same distance as we were and his 2-story was down. They had hit Big 5 first and cleaned out all of the guns and ammo. They also got propane and Coleman camp stoves, fuel, empty propane bottles and ice chests. They must have done this between Ron and Clarence’s homes because they also had tents. Ron had also cleaned out everything on our list from the Wal-Mart Pharmacy. The bag of pills he had for Linda and him was larger than the bag she had for Sharon and me. I noticed that Clarence also had a bag of drugs.

“We have to go back, Gar-Bear and get all of the bottled water before someone else gets to it.”

“Ask Dick to take his pickup. He’ll probably agree if you give him a tent, lantern and stove.”

“We need to fill those propane bottles, where do you suggest we go?”

“I think the nearest places that sell propane are the two Chevron stations.”

“We’re going to need a trailer.”

“I take my truck and trailer,” Dave offered. “Did you get me a gun?”

“Remington, Winchester or Mossberg?”

“What the difference?”

“The Mossberg is cheaper and the Remington and Winchesters cost about the same. All of them are the short barreled models.”

“Winchester?”

“Fine. Gary, do you want tarps to cover the patio cover and block the rain?”

“Good idea. See if you can find some.”

“Dick, Ron will give you a tent, lantern, stove and sleeping bag if you’ll help them get some water.”

“I’ll help them, but I was planning on staying in my trailer.”

“You’ll need propane, right? They have several empty bottles. They’re going to fill them at one of the Chevron stations.”

“I’ll get my empties. And, I’ll take a Remington shotgun.”

o

To be perfectly candid, I always figured on strategic reallocation. I’d often written that the early bird gets the worm. They were gone about 2 hours and while they were gone, some of us set up tents. We also emptied my shed and Chris, Matt and I slid it back into place. Sharon and I put a queen sized box springs and mattress in the shed for a bedroom. We brought the folding tables up from the shelters and had everything out of the house by the time they were back. We had lights of course, until the generator ran out of fuel. It had only run at 25% power most of the time unless we were cooking.

“What next?”

“We’re going to need more propane. Would it be possible to go to the place on Sierra Highway tomorrow and get all of the propane bottles they have in stock and fill them from their 500-gallon tank? They carry both the 5 and 10-gallon bottles and they keep them in the shed next to the back door.”

“I’ll take John with me to cover my back. Dave, can we borrow your truck and trailer tomorrow?”

“I’m about out of gas.”

“Dave, I have a 55-gallon drum, take what you need to fill it. Ron, Chris doesn’t have much gasoline for his generator, is there anything we can do?”

“How many generators do we need? We ought to get one for everyone.”

“Five, if Clarence and his boys are going to stay together.”

“I have a generator in my trailer, Gary.”

“Four, Ron. Dick, do you have enough propane?”

“25-gallons. Enough for now.”

“We won’t be able to go shopping after tomorrow, I expect that the National Guard will show up. We’d better get everything we need by tomorrow night or forget it. Have you seen many people out?”

“Some, but we tried to avoid people as much as possible under the circumstances.”

“Has anyone broken into the grocery stores?” I asked.

“We didn’t go inside, but they looked like they had been looted. There is still some food at the Wal-Mart store, or was.”

“I’ll take the watch tonight so everyone else can sleep. I have my wheelchair all charged up and can sit up near the entrance in case anyone comes to the tract. If you hear shooting, come running and be quick.”

“You’re going to sit there all night?”

“I’m used to staying up until dawn.”

o

Other than a couple of patrol cars on 47th Street East going somewhere in a hurry, I didn’t see anything all night. Around 6am I woke Ron up and told him they’d better get on the road before the Guard showed up. He told me that they’d hit Pep Boys and a couple other places that sold gas can plus the Lowe’s for generators. After that, they’d get all of the propane they could and call it quits.

They hit both the Lowe’s and Home Depot, which was only about a block away from Lowe’s. They came back to drop off a truck and trailer load of generators and empty gas cans and headed out for more. They came back in an hour with more gas cans and headed out for propane. By noon they were back and we had everything we needed, except gasoline.

“Chris, we need gasoline and we need to do it quick before the Guard shows up. Do you have anything that will draw the gas out of an underground service station tank?”

“I’ll figure something out, are all the cans in Dave’s pickup?”

“Some extras are piled on my front lawn.”

“Dave, shall we?”

About an hour after they got back, here came the Guard. A Hummer pulled up at the front of the tract and two guys got out, a Sergeant and a Lieutenant.

“Who are you?”

“My name is Gary, do you have any ID? You aren’t getting past me without proving you’re the good guys and not a couple of imposters.”

They ignored me and tried to get past, even though I had my Winchester in the scabbard of Salina, my Berettas strapped on and a shotgun across my lap. I whirled the wheelchair around and jacked a round into the shotgun. They knew the sound, stopped and turned around.

“You’re going to get hurt playing with guns, Mister.”

“You’re going to get dead ignoring me, Lieutenant. Besides, there are about 4 guys behind you now with weapons. Even if you get me, you have a problem. I’m a tired old man and you’d be doing me a favor to put me out of my misery, but I don’t think the other guys would like it much.”

“We’re supposed to believe that someone is behind us?”

Ron fired off his shotgun into the air, ending the standoff.

“We need water, ice, MREs and all the stuff you usually give survivors of disasters, we watch TV you know. Where do we sign up for our free \$2,000 shopping cards?”

“This isn’t New Orleans.”

“Politicians are the same no matter where you live. Now, what about the goodies?”

“You’re going to have turn in your weapons, we’ll handle security from now on.”

“Lieutenant, I’m a Patron member of the NRA. I’ve been a member for 41 years and nobody and I repeat, nobody, is taking any weapons from me. There is nothing illegal about a pump shotgun, single action revolvers or lever action rifles. Who in the hell do you think you are? Do you want to start a fight you can’t finish? I may have given up on Geraldo, but I don’t think much of the government of California. Anyway, what took you so long to get here? We’ve been out of the shelter 3 days and didn’t come out until the radiation level was 50mR.”



“You have a shelter?”

“Nah, I just said that, we all sat out in the radiation and croaked. Don’t I look dead to you?”

“Gar-Bear, are these guys giving you trouble?”

“They were just about to explain where our water, ice, MREs and \$2,000 debit cards were. This is Moon Shadows Parrish, fellas. I’m real sorry we don’t have any broken levees.”

“You are speaking to an officer and a gentleman, where do you think you get off talking like that?”

“Ron is this thing the trigger? I can never figure these darned shotguns out.”

“Yeah push the little button to the left and squeeze the trigger towards yourself, Gar-Bear.”

“The little button is already pushed, so all I need to do is squeeze?”

“That’s about the size of it.”

“Do I need to aim first?”

“At this range, it won’t make any difference.”

“Wait!”

“Yes?”

“What are you some kind of crackpot?”

“I haven’t smoke pot in 13 years. If I hadn’t have smoked it at all, I could have been a FBI agent.”

“Huh?”

“It was in the paper that you couldn’t be an FBI agent if you smoked pot. I smoked a joint in ’91 just to see what it tasted like. I like Kool’s better. Besides, it wasn’t my fault; I was drunk at the time.”

“Lieutenant, he’s definitely a crackpot.”

“See if I stick up for Noncoms anymore, Sergeant. What do you think, Ron, should I shoot them?”

“Did they show you their IDs?”

“They ignored me, partner.”

“Gary, that sounds like a shooting offense to me. We’ll get 2 more rifles, 2 of those useless Berettas and a Hummer.”

“I always wanted a Hummer.”

Chris was standing there shaking his head; he’d never heard the 3 of us when we really got the routine going good. Dick and Dave looked concerned and Lance was grinning from ear-to-ear. At least he’d figured out our routine. I put the safety on and laid the shotgun on my wheelchair, loosening the hammer thongs on my two revolvers. I reset my hat and turned to look them in the eye, hand poised over the crossdraw holster.

“In my day, I used to be pretty fast. What will it be gents?”

“When was that?”

“Oh, about 40 years ago. I started to slow down when we moved to California in ‘82. You can draw or you can start handing out the goodies.”

“We didn’t bring anything with us, mister, we were just taking a census to see who was alive and how many people needed help.”

“We have 37 people here. That’s about a pallet of MREs a week and lots of water and ice.”

“Sergeant make a note, 36 people and one crazy man in this housing tract.”

“What about the debit cards?”

“They quit handing those out, didn’t you hear?”

“I heard. You guys messed it up anyway, one lady charge \$64,000 on her card. When do the lights come back on?”

“It’s going to be a while, we’ve suffered a HEMP, but you probably don’t know what that means.”

“High-altitude Electro Magnetic Pulse attack. I have the China pdf file on my computer.”

“Does your computer work?”

“Sure, it’s hooked up to my generator. We couldn’t very well stay in an underground shelter without electricity, could we?”

“Did you have food in your shelter?”

“Beans and rice.”

“Thirty-seven people in an underground shelter eating beans? That place must really smell good.”

“It’s getting better, we’re airing it out.”

o

The problem with these military types is they think too much. All they had to do was show me their IDs and ask me how many people were in the housing tract, I would have told them. No, they had uniforms and guns and they thought they were in charge. Not them, they’d rather bully a civilian. They picked the wrong guy to bully, my house was falling down and I had an attitude before the earthquake and World War 3 and the sick Frenchmen got to the US. George had sent my boy to Iran and hadn’t even let him take his tank. The orders said Iraq, but George was a politician and all politicians lie. When they perfect the skill, they become reporters. Most of them started out as lawyers.

What? You thought I should be nice to the California National Guard? I planned to, just as soon as we had our water, ice and MREs. I knew how to take out one of those tanks too; Derek explained all of the weak spots to me. From the front, they were impossible to hurt, but from the back, they were particularly vulnerable. Besides, what were they going to do, finish dropping our houses? It would be nice if they did, I could get a new house from the government and keep the insurance money. We didn’t really need a thing, we’d already been out and about, but if they wanted to give us MREs, we could hang on to them until the next 6 disasters. We’d had 3 all at once and if there were a 4th, we’d have 9 before it ended.

The real reason I wrote fiction was because I hated soap operas and if I had to contend with them, I might just as well write my own. It was in the magazine in the doctor’s office. One of those things you read without getting very interested in. But this was going to be the 3 amigos last campaign, we were getting too old for this stuff. I had read just before TSHTF that the French were the furthest along on the vaccine for the H5N1 virus. They had a vaccine that worked most of the time and the US had ordered 2 million doses. That took care of <1% of the population, but what about the other 99+? 2 million doses were about enough for the military, healthcare workers and the politicians. But Clarence and I had both had the flu, so maybe our immune systems were up to snuff.

"We have 111 cases of MREs, it's going to be a while before we can get back. That should cover your food needs for about a month. We have 111 cases of 1 liter bottles of water to wash them down with."

"Thanks, but where is the ice?"

"The ice is in New Hampshire or Maine, I forget."

"We appreciate what you're doing, who won the war?"

"Here or there?"

"Take your pick."

"We kicked butts and took names off the China coast. They got angry and dumped 4 HEMP weapons plus nukes on 10 cities."

"But we retaliated, right?"

"They launched 25 Peacekeepers and wiped every major Chinese city off the map."

"Right, who won the war?"

"Nobody wins one of these things, mister. You would have probably been better off sitting out like you talked about and getting an overdose of radiation."

"Well, we didn't. We aren't suicidal any more. How long until the power is back on?"

"Might be a year; possibly never."

"A year? Where do we get more propane for my generator? Where do we get more gasoline for the other generators? What do we do when the MZBs come along?"

"The answer to the first two questions is wherever you got it before and the answer to the last question is that you have to defend yourself."

"But you wanted to take our weapons!"

"That was before we heard that you were members of the Palmdale Militia."

"That was a different story, we don't have a militia."

"Then you'd better form one."

"Can you let us have some M16s?"

## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 7 – Change of Plans

“No.”

“M203s?”

“No, nothing.”

“Are you absolutely sure?”

“Yes.”

“Ok.”

“What was that all about?”

“I asked them for weapons when they said we’d have to defend ourselves.”

“What did they say?”

“They said we’d have to go to Yermo.”

“I thought we weren’t doing that this time.”

“I changed my mind, fuel the pickups. Ronald, do you know how to fill one of those propane delivery trucks?”

“Did it every day.”

“You know where AmeriGas is right? Would you go get us a truckload of propane? John can ride shotgun.”

“What about the National Guard?”

“They said they were going to Lancaster and then Mojave.”

“I’ll get the propane, then what?”

“We head to Barstow.”

“What about Yermo?”

“Same place. We’ll take Lance; he was a Green Beret and knows all about military nomenclature.”

o

“M14 is a concussion mine, M16 is the bouncing Betty and the M18 is the Claymore. I recommend we not get any mines. We should probably just get some light, medium and heavy machine guns and some hand grenades. If we get M16s, we should add the M203s so we have a 400-meter blast radius for our grenades. I’m going to see if I can find a semi-auto M14 so I have the same weapons as the three of you have.”

“Take all you can find of anything we can use, Lance. We’re not going to get a second chance. Once they realize we’ve looted their Logistic Base, they’re going to guard the place like Fort Knox. The M249 or SAW is a light machinegun. The M240 is a medium machinegun and your friend and mine, the Ma Deuce, is the heavy machinegun. If we can find an Mk-19, so much the better, they have a range of over a mile. Do you agree?”

o

We didn’t get a lot at Barstow and Yermo, no more than we could carry. A semi would have been nice, but none of the ones at the Depot would start. Everyone found something they wanted and I drove my new used Hummer home, all by myself. I had it fixed up with a M240 and enough ammo that I could repel at least one small MZB attack. When we got home, we covered them with tarps and parked them all on Moonraker Road and Moondance Drive. The exact coordinates of your house can be determined by looking up your address on MapBlast and going to the highest resolution. The coordinates are part of the URL. My house is at approximately 34.57132N by 118.04692W and we live in the shed in the backyard.

We didn’t want the MREs; we just wanted our fair share. We stored the MREs in the shelter for the next time, assuming we lived through this one. Once a week the CNG came by to check on us. Every time they came, I hit them up for another 74 cases of MREs and 74 cases of water. The ice was in Illinois and I sure hoped they avoided Chicago. You pronounce that Chica-go, not Chi-ca-go. That’s where the Sears Tower and the John Hancock Building used to be.

The Guardsmen were wearing those N-95 or N-100 facemasks so we concluded that the flu was spreading. They didn’t try to enter the housing tract and Chris had the entrance blocked with his pickup and trailer. We didn’t know which would reach California first, the flu or the ice. Our principal problem was it was starting to get cold and six weeks into the disaster, we hadn’t seen a single insurance adjuster.

Finally KTPI came back on the air broadcasting local disaster information. You were supposed to call them if you had a missing loved one or whatever. Never mind the phones didn’t work, they gave their number every 10 minutes, I think the number was 1-800-4STUPID. The only news from the eastside was that a person or persons unknown had looted Big 5, Wal-Mart and the Chevron station on Pearblossom Highway. The person or persons unknown had completely gutted both stores and emptied the propane tanks at the Chevron station. You already know what we borrowed so you know it

couldn't have been us. I figured we couldn't have gotten more than 1,000-gallons of gasoline and maybe the 200-gallons of propane, from Chevron. We had knocked down a fence and put the propane tanker in my neighbor's backyard, under some camo netting we'd borrowed from Big 5.

"We're either going to have to stop taking MREs or start eating them fellas, the shelter is starting to fill up."

"What are we going to do when this is all over, drive the Hummers and the stuff we borrowed from Barstow and Yermo to the street and leave them sit?"

"Maybe the vehicles, but not the weapons and ammo, we could always be attacked by the Smurfs."

"It won't be the Smurfs, it will be Big Foot. There were several sightings of Big Foot in the Lancaster area in 1973."

"That Big Foot must be tired; he's been spotted in every state in the US."

"Maybe there's more than one of them."

"Nah, they explained Big Foot on *The Six Million Dollar Man*. Besides, it's just a myth."

I wasn't worried about Big Foot that had been 30 years before on the Westside. If there was such a thing, you could see it coming a mile away and get the 50 cal loaded. What you couldn't see was what I figured would kill us, those little Chinese bugs, the H5N1 virus. We masked our fear by clowning around.

o

The fear was there, thicker than the fog on a London morning. Our first step had been to make sure the tract was secure. We checked all of the houses and the only people left alive in the tract was our little group. We had collected the bodies and burned them, just in case. We refused to let anyone in and didn't go out, during the day. At night, we shopped, collecting non-perishable food. With the CNG having secured itself at the Lancaster and Palmdale Sheriff's Stations, and them being prevented from enforcing any laws because the Governor refused to issue them ammunition, we didn't have a lot of trouble.

"We have the new vaccine for the H5N1 virus, get everyone lined up and our medic will inject them."

"How do we know you aren't injecting those AVID chips?"

"The what?"

“The American Veterinary Identification Devices.”

“Do you read Survivalist Fiction?”

“Not really, I write it, mostly comedy.”

“The AVID chips are coated with a substance that prevents them from causing irritation in pets; they haven’t been tested on humans.”

“Well, ok, but if we get the flu or beep, it’s your fault.”

Ronald was first in line; apparently he hadn’t read that story. We all got the shots, which came from pre-filled syringes. By this point, I was totally paranoid, but they gave me the shot in my arm, not my shoulder. That night we broke into the High Desert Animal Clinic and borrowed their AVID Reader. We didn’t beep. Early studies showed that the vaccine was only partially effect; it worked on about 1/3 of the people.

If the world experienced a pandemic like all of those alarmists were projecting, that meant that most of the people would get sick and many would die. Some countries stockpile flu vaccines but since this was a new vaccine, nobody had any. If the US only bought 2 million doses from the French, how could it be that we were being vaccinated? We weren’t soldiers, healthcare workers or the military; we were just ordinary citizens.

“I don’t believe they gave us vaccine to protect us against the avian flu.”

“What did they give us?”

“Probably ordinary flu vaccine. I’ll let you know when Clarence and I get the flu again.”

“They said it was the avian flu vaccine.”

“I read on CNN that the US only bought 2 million doses of the partially successful vaccine from the French. I doubt there’d be enough to vaccinate us.”

“You’re paranoid.”

“All the same, we’d better keep wearing the masks. Just because you’re paranoid, doesn’t mean that they aren’t out to get you.”

“We’re starting to run out.”

“If that’s the case, we’d better get more. There is a medical supply place on Date in Lancaster and maybe they have some. If not, we can always check the Yellow pages.”

“That place is AV Sickroom Supply, there is another on West Avenue I and one right here in Palmdale.”



“We can get you an oxygen machine and you’ll feel better, Ron. Maybe we should look for those blood clotting bandages.”

“Are we planning on getting shot?”

“Not necessarily, one time I was sharpening one of my hunting knives and dropped it.”

“Stuck in the floor?”

“Stuck in the bottom of my foot and I bled like a stuck hog.”

“You’re kidding.”

“Would I lie about something as stupid as that? Ask Sharon; she wanted to take me to the hospital to get stitches. I wouldn’t go, it wasn’t like the time I cut my toe off. People like me have to keep a very good first aid kit around. You got Demerol injections and morphine sulfate tablets, right?”

“We didn’t even look; they weren’t on your list.”

“Next time we rip off a pharmacy, I’m going along. I know what to look for. We get 1,000 MZBs attacking this place and do you know what would happen?”

“What?”

“We’d all get killed.”

“But we have Interceptor Body Armor.”

“Yeah, Gary, that stuff stops bullets!”

“I knew we should have taken those Kevlar helmets.”

“Not when you get shot between the eyes. My buddy always says you shoot them twice in the chest and once between the eyes. I didn’t want one, I have a cowboy hat.”

“When are you going to change the oil in that thing?”

“I figured I’d just borrow a new one when the grease ring got to the top.”

“I’d say you’re about a year overdue.”

“Fine, I’ll get out my black hat, I don’t wear it often.”

“Why not?”

“The good guys wear white hats.”

“We could have painted the helmets white or gotten white helmet covers.”

“I’d prefer blue helmet cover covers.”

“Clarence, that’s a death warrant. The UN wears blue helmet covers. We don’t allow UN troops in this country under any circumstances.”

“Why not?”

“I’m not sure, but FT says they’re not on our side.”

“Is anyone on our side?”

“Great Britain and usually the Aussies, they speak English too.”

“No they don’t, you heard Paul Hogan. But the Kozlowski dame wasn’t half bad looking.”

“She lost weight. Ronald, all of your taste is in your mouth.”

“Where else should it be?”

“Clarence, did you lose your sense of taste when you got diabetes?”

“No, it’s still in my mouth.”

◦

They came up with 3 cases of masks; each holding 80 boxes of 30 masks each. What we really needed was the 3M 6291 P100 Mask with a lot of spare P100 filters. They were permanent masks that allowed you to change the filters. Not cheap and hard to find. But we had enough of the cheap disposable masks to last the better part of a year. Neither KTPI nor that station in Pasadena was talking about the avian virus, which was very odd. They talked about the 10 cities that had been bombed or nuked or whatever. They talked about the US kicking the Chinese’s butts. They talked about us being hampered by the terrain in Iran. Why didn’t we just nuke them and be done with it? Could the Muslim community be any angrier about the US? I’m sure that the Israelis would have done it pretty cheap. What was \$100 million considering what New Orleans had cost?

◦

“We have to empty out the shelter. If something else were to happen, we couldn’t get in there. We can store all of the MREs in the garage next door.”

“Don’t you think we have enough now? We got 111 cases at the get go and 74 cases a week ever since.”

“How many cases do we have?”

“111 plus (74×4), 407 less the two we opened to sample.”

“We can store them in the garage until it warms up, Ron. After, they’ll have to go back in the shelter to keep them from getting warm and shortening their shelf life.”

“How is it working out sleeping in the shed?”

“Sharon likes it. It was be just above freezing in there at night. We need a 55-gallon drum without an end.”

“What for?”

“So we can start a fire and stand around warming our hands like the bums do on TV.”

“Are you implying that we just 3 bums?”

“Three old bums, yes.”

*Experts say the H5N1 strain is mutating steadily and fear it will eventually acquire the changes it needs to easily infect and spread among humans. If it does, they say, it will sweep around the world in months, possibly killing millions.*

*The World Health Organization has been tracking the virus, taking samples and sending them to labs to be tested for mutations. WHO officials say quick action will be needed if the virus does make the final jump to become a human infection.*

*Some experts say the virus could theoretically be contained if the first human victims of a new strain are quarantined, treated quickly with antiviral drugs, and others around them are vaccinated.*

*But stocks of antiviral drugs, such as Gilead and Roche's Tamiflu, are limited, and the companies do not have the capacity to make large quantities quickly.*

*Vaccines take months to formulate and manufacture, and they must match the flu strain fairly precisely to be of any use, so they cannot be made ahead of an epidemic.*

“I don’t plan to stand out by a barrel and catch cold. If I did, I probably end up with the flu.”

“Why?”

“A cold might weaken my immune system. If Clarence and you want to stand out in the cold, it’s ok with me.”

“I ain’t no bum. No Sir, I ain’t standing out there either.”

“Relax, partner, I heard somewhere that God didn’t make any junk. That must mean the bums are people too. I know we had to change our plans about Barstow, but we’re a little better prepared. Lance got an M14 and 4 of the M-40s.”

M-40A3 Sniper System:

The M-40 is the military version of the Winchester Model 700 bolt-action rifle that fires the military 7.62mm round. Mounting state-of-the-art optics and a composite stock, the M-40 system has been a reliable, proven weapon in the Marine Corps inventory since the Vietnam War. The M-40 is currently produced by the Marine Corps' own Rifle Team Equipment Shop at Quantico where it is being further refined for the 21st century. Question, does that qualify as an Oops? Winchester model 700? I ain’t THAT crazy.

I put it in as a search term and my computer laughed at me. Maybe the guy was confused, I heard they used a Winchester model 70 floorplate and modified trigger guard.

“So what? I can’t see 100 yards through one of those peep sights and since I had my the lens swapped out in my eyes I can’t use a scope anymore.”

“How are you going to shoot at the MZBs?”

“Pop and pray.”

“You need one of the M16s.”

“Why?”

“Then you could spray and pray.”

“What is the difference between a M4-series carbine and the M4A1 is fully automatic.”

“They added A1 to the nomenclature?”

“Wrong, the M4 is 3-round burst and the M4A1 is fully automatic, according to Army FM 3-22.9, Chapter 2. Let me give you a piece of advice. If you every have to use one of those 5.56mm popguns, don’t use the M4 or M4A1.”

“Why not?”

“They have a shorter barrel and the velocity of the ammo is lower which means that the bullet drop is much higher. They aren’t worth the grief.”

One complaint had a familiar ring to it. It was something I’d heard before. It brought to mind the old saying; you should walk a mile in a man’s moccasins before you judge him. Geena Davis wasn’t President and it was really a shame, she was a good one. It was a shame it was only a TV program, she even told the reporters to leave her kids alone. If they took all of the money they’re spent on trying to defeat Arnold and gave it to the state, there wouldn’t be a budget crisis. I wasn’t so sure I was going to vote for him, until my daughter started supporting his detractors. He has my vote now. I have to end this story before there’s another disaster. Otherwise it would on and on and on and on until we had 9.

The 3 amigos are retiring, they're tired. They didn't have the energy to defend the housing tract one more time and you couldn't kill the avian flu bug with a rifle.

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) - Out of an idyllic blue sky dotted with birds and butterflies come warplanes that carpet-bomb the Smurfs' forest village, killing Smurfette, leaving Baby Smurf wailing in distress and sending Papa Smurf and the others bolting for cover.

The scene from a bizarre commercial featuring Belgium's lovable blue-skinned cartoon characters is so upsetting it can only be shown after 9 p.m. to avoid scaring children.

## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 8 – Reprieve

That was a piece from CNN, and I didn't make it up. I wanted to hang up my guns and let Chris and the others guard the housing tract. Ron called me a quitter and then turned to more powerful prose. I explained my reasons and he said it was BS. He showed me his favorite gun, a .41 Magnum. We all have a favorite; mine was my Winchester rifle because it didn't care if my hands were numb. He'd always wanted to shoot someone with that magnum of his and wanted to know if I was volunteering.

"Aren't you tired? Don't you want to retire?"

"More than you'll ever know Gar-Bear, but we have a problem and we have to stick around and solve it."

"Yeah, Gary, what's going on?"

"The battery in my wheelchair died."

"So we give it a decent burial and get you another one."

"With bagpipes?"

"Nah, but those places in Palmdale and Lancaster that sell medical supplies had tons of batteries. We can get Chris to swap them out."

"Say, maybe while he's doing that, he can adjust the speed control to allow me to really go fast. I have the complete manual on the wheelchair."

"Is there anything you don't have a manual for?"

"Sex."

"Me neither," Ron admitted.

"Gary can you get me any more of the Viagra?" Clarence asked.

"It would seem that we missed a lot of things at the pharmacy. Are there any pharmacies that haven't been looted?"

"Walgreen's."

"Why not?"

"It's really secure with bars on the windows and one of those roll down things in front of the door."

“If the phones were working, we could call Jimmy Walker.”

“Why?”

“DYN-O-MITE!” Clarence explained.

“I’ll postpone retiring on several conditions: 1) you get me new batteries for my wheel-chair; 2) you figure out how to get the stuff on my new list that we may need from Walgreen’s; and, 3) you admit that without my shelter, we’d all be dead.”

“How long would it have taken 50R to kill us?”

“About 12 hours to get a lethal dose. But in the first 7 hours, it would have dropped to 5R so it would have taken longer. 300R in 120 days is a death sentence.”

“How do you know this stuff?”

“The school I attended taught reading.”

“I’ll agree on one condition.”

“What’s that?”

“We don’t take any more MREs from the CNG. We’re running out of places to store them and might be forced to eat them.”

“Yeah, Gary, I’d rather eat beans and rice.”

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“What about the speed?”

“Chris cranked it up ½ turn.”

“No bagpipes?”

“Sorry.”

“Even the dog in Long Beach, Ranger, had a full police funeral.”

“Has anyone checked you head lately?”

“I had an MRI of my brain, nothing showed up.”

“That’s it explains it.”

“What?”

“Never mind.”

“Did you get everything on the list?”

“Yep, although I don’t know why you want all of that stuff.”

“I have to sharpen a knife. I could get hurt and if I did, it might hurt. What about the hospital supplies?”

“We got them, but what are you going to do with them?”

“I have no idea, but it’s a comfort having them available.”

In a world gone mad, with the electricity out for the duration plus 6 months, continuing small aftershocks and the occasional click on the CD V-715, we were in a tough spot. The driver bringing the ice from the Northeast would probably bring the avian flu along. The delivery truck of propane meant I wouldn’t run out electricity any time soon and I could always share. We were sort of like the Palestinians, trapped in a refugee camp with limited resources but armed to the teeth.

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*My Fellow Americans,*

*In view of the disasters in our country, we’ve decided to bring our troops home. They have had the H5N1 vaccinations and will be able to help restore order. Your country will pursue a different course of action to end the War on Terror. The troops should be arriving in 3 weeks. Until that time, I urge all of you to cooperate with local authorities.*

*God Bless America.*

“What do you suppose he meant by ‘different course of action’?”

“He can’t use missiles; they could be detected by radar.”

“So, he’d have to use something that couldn’t be detected by radar, right?”

“I suppose.”

“You can’t see a B-2 or an F-117 on radar.”

“Not true. You can see them, but they don’t give off a big enough return that you recognize them as aircraft. The B-2 flies between the radars and goes unnoticed. But, I sup-



pose you're right, if he were going to use nukes against them, he'd have to use the B-2s. Isn't it a shame that we can only get up 8 at a time?"

"What do you mean?"

"The coating on the plane is so sensitive that they only have an operational readiness of about 37%. A flight of 4 B-2s out of Diego Garcia could pretty well wipe out Iran and Iraq. We have those neutron bombs if we wanted to use them, but after the way the Chinese hit us with dirty warheads, I'm not so sure."

The B61 has been deployed on a wide variety of tactical and strategic aircraft. Strategic versions have been carried on B-52, FB-111, B-1, and B-2 bombers. Tactical versions, with lower yield options, have been deployed on a variety of US and NATO air force aircraft, including the F-100, F-104, F-4, F-105, F-15E, F-16, F-111, F-117, and Tornado. The US Navy and Marines have used the B61-2/5s on A-4, A-6, A-7, and F/A-18 aircraft. After the navy terminated the nuclear strike mission from US aircraft carriers in the early 1990s, the bombs were retired and disassembled. According to the Bush administration's recent Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), some future Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighters may be nuclear capable. They would most likely use the B61 bomb.

9/20/2005 - F.E. WARREN AIR FORCE BASE, Wyo. (AFPN) – The Peacekeeper intercontinental ballistic missile mission came to an end Sept. 19 during a ceremony here.

Hundreds of Airmen and civilians, including Dr. Ronald M. Sega, undersecretary of the Air Force, were on hand to celebrate the Peacekeeper's role in nuclear deterrence.

"Today we celebrate 19 years of Peacekeeper service," Dr. Sega said. "Behind 19 years are many more years of strategic nuclear deterrence in ICBM operations."

Dr. Sega, guest speaker at the event, had many words of thanks and appreciation for the people who made the Peacekeeper mission a success throughout its years. He also explained its development and journey to becoming an operational weapon system, and credited the Peacekeeper with helping to end the Cold War.

"Along with the rest of the nuclear triad, the Peacekeeper was a great stabilizing force in an increasingly unstable world," Dr. Sega said.

The Peacekeeper was the nation's most advanced strategic missile, so advanced that it was called the Missile Experimental, or MX, during President Jimmy Carter's administration. President Ronald Reagan renamed it "Peacekeeper" in November 1982.

"As the 400th Missile Squadron brought its full complement of Peacekeepers online in 1988, another aspect of the system's success came to light," Dr. Sega said. "Even though the Soviets had their own missiles, they weren't as good as Peacekeeper."

As the last step in the deactivation ceremony, a missile combat crew officer at Papa One Launch Control Center confirmed that there were no longer any Peacekeeper ICBMs on strategic alert in the 400th MS. With that confirmation, the Peacekeeper era came to a close.

The Peacekeeper warheads, with their advanced safety features, will be installed on Minuteman III ICBMs as part of the Safety Enhanced Re-entry Vehicle program, allowing the Air Force to upgrade its Minuteman fleet. Some of the W87 Peacekeeper warheads will be redeployed on Minuteman ICBMs under the Safety Enhanced Reentry Vehicle (SERV) program. Each W87 warhead will displace one W62, or three W78 warheads currently deployed on Minuteman. (They retired those that were left.)

It took a while to pull the troops out of Iran, Iraq, South Korea, Germany and the other place we had troops stationed. That left only the troops at Anderson AFB and Diego Garcia. For some reason, they had those airmen working overtime; trying to make sure all of the wing coatings were just perfect. At least that was the rumor on the ham radio. Maybe Ron was right... And who exactly would we choose to nuke? Was Paris on the list? If it wasn't, George was missing a golden opportunity to get the Democrats in Congress really pissed off. Maybe they'd get so angry, they'd vote in the preacher he nominated to the Supreme Court, what was her name again? I remember, Mrs. Nobody from Texas.

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I mean what could happen now? Those volcanoes that had begun to erupt were up in Alaska. That ash couldn't reach all the way to southern California. We had plenty of volcanoes of our own; we should be worried about them instead of Cleveland Volcano, Mount Spurr and Tanaga Volcano. The only one I'd heard of was Mount Spurr. Why should we worry about them, we were still getting the occasional M4 aftershock? And to make matters worse, the Corporal who brought the 74 cases of MREs and 74 cases of water had the sniffles. I guess it didn't matter about the \$2,000 shopping cards, our shopping cards didn't have a limit and ammo was readily available.

Who was it that said he never killed anyone who didn't deserve it, Rooster Cogburn? It had to be John Wayne, regardless of the role. I read the book as a serial in the Weekly Magazine that came with the Sunday paper, that and Jurassic Park. It was only later that I met the lady who claimed she called Michael Crichton, Mikey. She knew him when he was an intern. Which was strange because he attended Harvard Medical School. On the other hand, they were from New York originally.

CRICHTON, (John) Michael. American. Born in Chicago, Illinois, October 23, 1942. Educated at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, AB 1964. Visiting Lecturer in Anthropology at Cambridge University, England, 1965. Henry Russell Shaw Traveling Fellow, 1964-65. Entered Harvard Medical School, MD 1969; spent one year as a post-doctoral fellow at the Salk Institute for Biological Sciences, La Jolla, California 1969-1970. Visiting Writer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1988. He's 6'10" tall.

By the time the ice made it to Palmdale, it was the middle of the winter and we were storing MREs in a second garage. That didn't make a lot of sense, the garages were far more flimsy than the houses they were part of, why didn't they fall down too? They probably just swayed. Nobody was willing to risk spending all night in their garages, but by February, the houses had completely collapsed and the garages were still standing. We'd been watching for the MZBs, but didn't see any because we weren't sure what they looked like.

"Want me to spell you?"

"Y-O-U."

"I meant did you want me to take over the guard duties?"

"I have new batteries in my wheelchair and Chris goosed it up so it goes 6mph. I have a shotgun, lever action rifle and 2 revolvers. I can handle it partner, but if you want to guard the place while I answer a call of nature, be my guest."

"Couldn't you have just said yes?"

"That only takes one line."

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"Aren't you cold sitting out here all of the time?"

"Of course I'm cold. Hell I'm freezing at night when I'm in bed under 3 blankets. The thing about it is it's so quiet. No wife or daughter screaming at the grandchildren, Missy lays right there and keeps me company and I always bring 3 packs of Kool's."

"You smoking that much these days?"

"No, but I'd sure hate to run out."

"Why don't you bring your M1A?"

"I'm afraid if the Army showed up and saw the muffler and the 20-round magazines, they might try to take it away. These Guard guys are probably all a bunch of liberals from San Francisco."

"So leave the muffler off and use a 10-round magazine."

"You just don't understand. Ten shots aren't enough to guarantee a hit and Clarence was right, it's pretty loud."

Not using missiles on Iraq and Iran meant that somebody would care if we attacked them. Probably the French, they opposed everything we did including manufacturing soap. Do you suppose that George watched Commander in Chief when it was on the air and found out how one was supposed to govern? It would be just our luck if he watched West Wing. They were in the process of dumping Martin Sheen. Best thing that ever happened to TV. His real name is Ramon Estevez (Spanish). He's been arrested over 70 times for protesting the US government; maybe he ought to move to Spain. He could take Mike Farrell with him when he went. Farrell is married to Shelley Fabares. Does Farrell strike you as a former Marine? I guess so; Lee Harvey Oswald and Charles Whitman were Marines too. There are one or two bad apples in every barrel. Do I dislike Farrell and Sheen? No, I just boycott anything they do, personal choice. I threw away every movie I had with either of them in it. Joe McCarthy wasn't all bad.

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We heard later that someone had nuked Iraq and Iran, probably the French. The US ambassador to the UN wanted to the General Assembly to censure the French for their unprovoked attack. This guy, John Bolton, just about had me believing that the French did it. The French had 3 Triumphant class submarines all equipped with 16 M45 SLBMs. The M45 differs from its predecessor by its increased range (6000 km vs. 4000 km), its increased accuracy and penetration capabilities and its new TN75 warheads. Each missile carries six independently targetable MIRVs, each armed with a thermonuclear warhead of 150kT. They used the D5 missiles with the older 100kT warheads, which were about the size of the 150kT warheads used by the French. Bolton was insisting that all of the D5s had been upgraded to the W88, 450kT warheads.

When the French denied Bolton's claim but refused to allow anyone to inspect their 3 subs, Bolton claimed that proved that what he was saying was true. Meanwhile the French accelerated the construction of their 4th Triumphant class sub, Terrible, and launched it early. Are you a target?

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November 16, 1994: The cold morning sky was clear as we took off from the Pyongyang airport in a dark green military helicopter bearing the distinct red-star emblem of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. As the vintage 1960s chopper flew with surprising quiet over the rough mountain terrain, Dr. Li Sang Gun, director of the "Radiochemistry Laboratory" at Yongbyon, and I made an attempt at small talk.

Dr. Li was escorting the first official US delegation ever to visit his country to the highly secret Yongbyon nuclear complex 75 miles to the northwest. Here North Korea's first small nuclear reactor lay dormant, with some 48 tons of highly radioactive spent fuel stored in a pool of water. That fuel contained enough plutonium for possibly five or six nuclear weapons.

You caught the date, right?

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Why my fixation with nuclear weapons? There isn't much I can do about hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes or tsunamis, but a nuclear war can be protected against. As long as your shelter isn't in the crater, you have a chance to survive. People should have learned something from Three-Mile Island and Chernobyl. Even at the best of times a nuclear accident is possible. If that weren't enough, there are something on the order of up to 20,000 nuclear weapons distributed in the arsenals of the various countries. Ever heard of Rocky Flats?

Food and water don't really matter if you're dead. Forget the shelter? You don't need food, water, shelter, medicine or anything if you're dead. Even if your shelter is a make-shift thing in your basement, you need to survive the fallout before you worry about medicine. Even though I take insulin, I could get by without for a few days, I'm a type II not a type I diabetic. Insulin keeps well and I'd guess that every insulin dependent person never gets below one or two bottles. If you don't have the money for a CD V-715, buy a Kearny kit because they're cheap. Frugal has a good price on Iodate. Or, if you prefer, sit out with the rest of us and watch the missiles come in. If you live north of Minneapolis, the area is RED because they are east of all of the missile silos. Texas, by contrast is the lowest level. I think about it every time I remember those B-47s sitting on the Edwards runway in 1962. It went way beyond terrified. Each of those planes was carrying 2 hydrogen bombs.

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"Who we are at any moment in time is the collection of our experiences."

"I agree, but what brought that up?"

"I was thinking about the Cuban Missile Crisis, Ron. We're only 40 miles as the crow flies from where they parked those 12 B-47s carrying hydrogen bombs. We went to work like any other morning and then Kennedy made that address and scared most of us to death. We came home that night to find 12 B-47s, probably from March, sitting on the end of the runway loaded up and ready to go. They retired the last B-47s the year after I got out of the Air Force."

"I remember that pretty well, but from a different perspective, Gar-Bear. That was about the time I tried AA for the first time."

"Go get loaded when Kennedy said we might be going to war?"

"Probably, I can't really remember. I went back and forth about like a ping pong ball in those days."

"I forget entire years, Ron, but I'll always remember October of 1962."

“You knew that sooner or later someone would nuke the US didn’t you?”

“I don’t know, partner, I suppose that I always hoped it wouldn’t happen. Anyone fool enough to do it had to have a death wish.”

“Do you think it was really France that nuked the Middle East?”

“I have no evidence to the contrary, but that wouldn’t be my first guess. I figure we snuck in with a SSBN and launched 16 of its 24 missiles and then blamed them.”

“That would have taken some planning; we had 8 warheads on our missiles, didn’t we?”

“I believe we did. Someone must have removed 2 from each of the sixteen missiles so we only had 6 warheads per missile. Still  $6 \times 16 = 96$  warheads and they could have just as easily launched 12 at 8 warheads per missile. We’ll probably never know the truth.”

To explain, Ron was sitting with me while I had guard duty. I had my wheelchair on the sidewalk these days and Chris had removed his pickup and trailer from in front of the entrance to Moon Shadows. I asked him to sit and visit for a while because quite honestly I was afraid of the dark and had been since about age 5. Usually Missy sat with me on a leash and I knew that no one could sneak up on her. We had a ½ gallon thermos of coffee and he had his packets of Sweet and Low. I had Benadryl for when the coffee finally got to me and gave me the hives.

We were beginning to feel very, very old. Even though it had only been a few months since the earthquake and attack and none of us had gotten the avian flu, things weren’t really good. The California Earthquake Insurance was a state program and someone hadn’t done a very good job of estimating the losses that would come from the Big One. They said they would pay our claims, eventually, but we were wondering if we could hold out that long. The CNG had forced its way into the tract, pulled the tarps off the Hummers and driven them off. The machine guns were in Mr. Cleans (Chris) garage.

Lance had foreseen the problem and brought tripods for the Ma Deuces from Barstow. The M240s and SAWs didn’t need them. Lance had gotten the Marine Corps infantry modification kits that added the bipod, etc, to the M240 and made it a M240G. They were pretty darned heavy and I couldn’t handle one had I wanted to. Lance was older than any of the 3 of us, but in great condition. He still had sharp creases in his pants and was rather dignified. He claimed he never laid hands on a M240, but he had it disassembled for cleaning in a minute. He was a Captain in Vietnam and ended up a Major. And for all he told me about what he did in ‘Nam, I had no idea what he did over there. He surely knew his weapons. So far, in the time since the disaster, we’d only fired one shot, the one that Ron had fired into the air to announce their presence to the CNG.

“So, who get to handle the machineguns?”

"I can tell you who it won't be. Me. I can barely pick up a M240G. Let the young guns have them, they're strong and like stuff that fires a lot of shots. I suppose if we could come up with some sort of scabbard for the back of this wheelchair, I could carry the M1A and the magazines in saddlebags or something. We should just finish tearing down the houses and see if there is anything we can salvage."

"Not me, partner. Clarence and I discussed this and we're going to wait for the insurance to settle. They can build us new homes and we're going to sell them for whatever we can get."

"Where are you going after you sell your home?"

"I'm going to New Mexico and Clarence is returning to Birmingham."

"I wonder how hard it would be to dig up the shelter and move it to Arizona."

"Where do you want to go?"

"Sedona."

"They could probably detach the various parts and move it. Then they could reinstall it when you got where you wanted to go."

"All I need is a space big enough to plant the shelter. Sharon and I could get a singlewide and park it right on top. I suppose we'd have to let AmeriGas pick up their tank and try and get a new one when we got there."

"How far is it from Cedar Hill to Sedona?"

"262 miles as the crow flies, but 358 miles by road. You take I-40 from Flagstaff and..."

"Yeah, I know the way."

"...and go to Gallup where you pick up the Devil's Highway to Shiprock where you pick up 64 to 550. Right?"

"Right. Planning on coming over to visit?"

"Probably not. I don't drive and Sharon drives so slowly, it would take us a couple of days to get 360 miles. It wouldn't be the same once the team breaks up. Clarence will be in Alabama, you in New Mexico and me in Arizona."

"I thought she drove fast."

"Only on roads she knows."

“What’s in Sedona?”

“Not much of anything, it’s a tourist trap. What’s in Cedar Hill?”

“About the same without the tourists. All you get there is people passing through on their way to Durango.”

“I checked my nuclear map on my computer, both Sedona and Cedar Hill are in yellow areas. That is the area that would get less than 3,000R. Clarence would be moving to a dark brown area, 6-15,000R, the same as Los Angeles County.”

“Maybe I should try and talk him out of it, Gar-Bear. Can you print out the map?”

“Sure, it shows every County in the US. 50% of the people and 47% of the land area of the country would be exposed to a radiation level exceeding 3,000R.”

“What does that assume?”

“An all-out attack by the Russians using low yield nuclear weapons. They have about as many as we do.”

“What did we get?”

“It was a minimal attack, using medium to high yield weapons. They said only 10 cities were hit and 4 HEMP were exploded.”

“Why do you say a minimal attack?”

“The Chinese didn’t have many intercontinental missiles capable of reaching our eastern cities. If they had waited until they had fielded more of the DF-31A, it could have been a different story. But I suppose our interfering in their Taiwan invasion forced them to launch way ahead of schedule. Derek claims that the Russians have the same problem, but they seem to be able to put up orbital payloads whenever they want.”

“Are they still supplying the ISS?”

“If they aren’t no one is. Our problem is that no one is willing to accept the risks that go along with space flight. If they hadn’t been in such a hurry, they could have built a real space shuttle that was carried atop of the rocket instead of being strapped onto the side. Those F-1 engines each developed 1.5 million pounds of thrust and if they had used maybe 8 engines, they could have lifted the shuttle into orbit without much trouble. They will probably never build another shuttle. I saw a film in 1963 that showed a design they never used. All of the stages were recoverable and if anything went wrong with the launch, the shuttle fired its engines and left the area almost instantly. I think they called it the DC-X.”



## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 9 – Lessons

Thanks for the offer, but rather than buy the book, I'll have one of my 3 kids explain sex to me. Diabetic Neuropathy is a small blood vessel disease that ends up killing of the nerves in your periphery. Ron had prostate cancer and that changed him more than you can imagine. Knowledge has never been the problem. First it was availability and much later physical ability. They got their Hummers because there were belts in the machineguns mounted on the Hummers they already had. I might be medium fast, but I could never outdraw a M240. And, even if I did, my revolvers only hold 6 cartridges each. There are a couple of hundred rounds in a belt for M240. Did I miss anyone?

When the Earthquake Authority finally paid our claims, there was a lot to do. First one contractor did the demolition. I had Roto-Rooter come in and do a fast job on all of the drains. We extend the kitchen to the corner they left open in the original floor plan, increasing the size of the house. While the house was down, I had the shelter removed and placed in storage. We divided up the machineguns; none of the guys in the housing tract wanted anything to do with them.

There still wasn't any electricity and because AmeriGas had picked up their tank, I didn't have a generator. I suppose I could have used bottles, but let the contractor provide his own electricity. We camped in Lance's backyard. Our refrigerators and freezer were plugged into Lance's generator. You get a good framing crew and they can frame a house in a day or two. The room that I used as an office couldn't legally be converted to a bedroom because it connected to the garage. We wired the place right this time, using 25 pairs for the phone and more electrical circuits. When it was done, we put it on the market. The housing shortage forced the price up to \$275,000. Clarence got about the same and Ron got over \$300 grand.

"God, I hate breaking up the team. Ron, did you talk Clarence out of going to Birmingham?"

"Nope."

"I don't suppose I can persuade you to move to Sedona?"

"Nope. Did you find a lot in the Sedona area?"

"Nope, they're too expensive. Beside the altitude in Cedar Hill is worse than Denver, I wouldn't be able to breath."

"I know the feeling. Every time we visit Bob, I can barely breathe."

"Ron you'll need to be on oxygen all of the time. We should try and find a compromise."

"Like what?"

“Holbrook is out; it’s almost as high as Cedar Hill. Kingman is 3,450’.”

“I wouldn’t want to go much over 3,500’ feet, but I’ve heard some bad things about Kingman.”

“I know. I’m the one who told you.”

“What about Las Vegas?”

“Too many people and you couldn’t stay out of the casinos.”

“Still, Nevada has completely open gun laws.”

“Let me look at a map, partner. Hmm, how about Searchlight, halfway between Vegas and Laughlin?” (Searchlight didn’t make it to CNN’s best places to retire 2005.)

“What cities are nearby?”

“In the immediate area, nothing. It has an airport, but it looks like General Aviation. The elevation is 3,540’. Maybe we could find some rural property and push through a zone change to reclassify the land from R-U (Rural Open Land) Zone to R-1 (Single Family Residential) Zone.”

“Been doing research?”

“When don’t I? We got the phones back and I set up a dialup account.”

“What do you want to do?”

“Why don’t we get in your car and the 4 of us go check the place out. Sharon should be able to find a quilting group somewhere in the area.”

“And then what?”

“If we like the place, we could look for 5 acres of rural real estate. We could go halves and you could put in any kind of home you wanted. I’m going with burying the shelter and setting a singlewide or a doublewide right on top of it.”

“Fine, and then what?”

“Fence it, put in a barn and some livestock, maybe a beef and a hog.”

“No horses?”

“I suppose we could ride in the spring and winter. I’ll have to find me a horse with training wheels.”

“Your wheelchair is going to feel bad when you get a horse and name it Salina.”

“I’m going to get me a horse that doesn’t know how to run and I’ll name it Jack. I’ll get a mule so you’ll have a relative living nearby.”

“Maybe you should just ride the mule.”

“Maybe I will I heard that they walk fast but aren’t much on running.”

“Not so, wise one, they use mules for barrel racing.”

“I guess I have to shop around. Maybe I’ll get a gaited mule that is out of a Tennessee Walking horse. If I can get one that flunked the test, it would be cheaper.”

Mules are stubborn.”

“No they’re not. Mules are smart. When they get tired, they just quit.”

“Wouldn’t it be a good idea to see if we have a place before we start picking out livestock?”

It would be a step in the right direction. According to my map, Searchlight was in a 3,000-6,000R area. Kingman wasn’t really that far from Searchlight as the crow flies, 53 miles. But given the choice of the boonies or a large city, I’d take the boonies. When we got there, I looked, but couldn’t find the searchlight; maybe I missed something. The climate is a little cooler than Las Vegas because Searchlight is on a higher elevation, but it still ranges in the nineties in the summer; cool enough to ride. Consider it a done deal, Ron bought 5 acres and hired a lawyer to get it rezoned to R-1.

We were on the Westside for a change. They proceeded to build a 4,000ft<sup>2</sup> ranch style home. Sharon and I bought a doublewide, which we sat right over the shelter. The shelter had to be dynamited into place, the ground was a little on the hard side. Ron said we should get together and share a 10,000-gallon propane tank that was metered. Why not, he was the one with the connections? Water would be a problem, as we were quick to find out. I suggested that we each take one of the 1,700-gallon cisterns and think about putting in a new tank for the shelter. Watertanks.com had a 10,000-gallon black poly tank for \$6 grand. We decided to leave it above ground because water couldn’t become radioactive.

When the kids wanted to know where we were moving, we told them Las Vegas. We only gave them the cell phone numbers; we didn’t want them to find us. Ron added a Kohler 30RES in case he lost his lights, but then they had more money to spend than we did. The 30RES was rated at 125 amps just under that of the RS15000. They popped for a prefabricated barn after I told Ron about a story I written where the residents got a prefabricated barn, from *A Family Alone*. The place was perfect when we

were done; all we needed was the livestock. Ron bought a put in a Castlebrook Barns Raised Center Aisle 8 stall horse barn on a concrete slab from the company in Fontana.

We went together for 2 Angus steers and 4 feeder pigs. They bought saddle horses, Sharon got her Arabian and I got a gaited mule that had flunked the test. Then we put in a prefabricated chicken coop and bought some chicks. We got Leghorns for meat and Rhode Island Reds for eggs. We didn't buy any roosters. We only got 6 egg layers, they produce enough cholesterol in a year, an average of 260 eggs each, that Ron ought to clog up good.

"Are you going to shovel the manure?"

"Nope."

"Well, Gar-Bear, I sure as hell won't do it. What do we do?"

"Hire someone to muck the stalls and spread the manure on the sand. Maybe in a couple of years we can turn it into loam. Then we can grow grass and not have to buy so much hay."

"Are we going to live that long?"

"I'm going to live forever, Fame!"

"Infamous would be closer to the truth."

"Listen, my years of research paid off. I know right where to buy a barn, water tanks and everything. I even figured out that the Onan RS15000 or the Kohler RES30 were about equal, both put out a bit more than 100amps so we'd always have full power. Even allowing for altitude, we have at least 100amps. It's not as hot here as it is in Palmdale, so maybe the air conditioners won't run as much."

"Did you figure out how to get the machineguns we borrowed from the Marines registered?"

"Not exactly, no. But with our house paid for, we might be able to afford a payment on a new car."

"What are you going to get?"

"Hummer H1 Alpha."

"What year?"

"2006."

“That will go 150 grand.”

“That was about what we owed on the house. We’ll manage. You’re going to have to put in a fuel tank.”

“Why me?”

“Because I can’t afford to?”

“You must think I’m made of money.”

“I don’t trade cars every year. I don’t have a 4,000ft<sup>2</sup> house for 2 people. I didn’t opt for a \$10,000 generator rather than an \$8,000 generator. I don’t even have a horse.”

“Fine, what’s the point?”

“You should buy a Hummer too so you can justify the tank to Linda.”

“Half gas and half diesel?”

“Unless you want to run diesel in Linda’s car or gas in our Hummers.”

“How are we going to get the gas out of the tank?”

“Oh, you’re going underground? I guess you’ll need a gas station pump of some kind.”

“Nobody is going to steal water, Gar-Bear. Fuel, on the other hand might be too tempting. What kind of mileage do they get?”

“I have no idea, probably 8-10mpg. They’re about like the muscle cars from when we were kids.”

“Maybe, but gas was under 30¢ a gallon when we were kids.”

“So, diesel is only \$4.50 a gallon now. We can take the cars when mileage is a consideration.”

“I don’t know.”

“Maybe we can get them with modified roofs with ring mounts for our machine guns. The women can drive and we can mow down the MZBs.”

“In a year, we’ve only fired four shots, one shotgun blast and one sighting shot from our M1As.”

“Just because you’re paranoid, doesn’t mean they’re not out to get you Ronald.”

“You said that back on page 64.”

“Doesn’t make it any less true.”

o

Ron and I always argue so we have to have something to do. Especially living in a small Nevada town named Searchlight that didn’t have a searchlight that I could find. Oh yeah, when we got to Nevada, I got a driver’s license. The sheriff shall issue a permit to carry a firearm concealed to any person qualified to possess a firearm under state and federal law who: submits an application; is at least 21 years of age; is not a felon or otherwise precluded from owning a firearm; and demonstrates competence with a firearm by presenting a certificate or other documentation to the sheriff which shows that applicant successfully completed a course approved by the sheriff issuing the permit, or successfully completed a course in firearm safety offered by a federal, state or local law enforcement agency, community college, university or national organization that certifies instructors in firearm safety.

Edith Head, the costume designer was from Searchlight. I saw her in person on the Art Linkletter show. They taped two shows per day. That was around ’62 or ’63. Harry Reid was from Searchlight and I hope he gets reelected forever and never comes home!

We took the stupid little class and applied for a Nevada CCW. We were approved. It didn’t really matter, we’d have carried anyway, but now we could carry a concealed weapon anywhere it was permitted. Even Linda and Sharon took the class and applied. Sharon wanted to carry my Nazi .32. So did I and that’s what caused the fight. She won, but I got to buy a new concealable handgun. I don’t care for the Glock, so I opted for something else, the H&K USP Tactical 45. But when I checked I learned that the larger handguns were more difficult to silence, the bigger the bore – the greater the noise.

A Shooting Times Technical Editor rates the 9mm Luger and .357 Magnum as the most influential and important autoloader and revolver cartridges of the century. Then, he went on to say, “The award for top pistol and revolver cartridge of the 20th century by any standard should really go to the .22 Long Rifle rimfire for both. Think about it.”

Given a choice between the .380 and the 9mm, he said that the 9mm won hands down. He said that the 30-06 was the greatest rifle cartridge of the 20th century. His top 50 firearms of the 20th Century were:

1. M1 Garand
2. Government Model 1911A1
3. M16/AR15
4. S&W Model 27
5. Browning Auto-5
6. Glock pistols

7. Remington Model 700 series
8. S&W Model 19 Combat Masterpiece
9. Ruger .22 auto pistol
10. Remington Model 870
11. AK47
12. S&W Model 60 Chiefs Special
13. Beretta Model 92FS
14. Browning Superposed
15. Walther PP pistol series
16. S&W Model 29/629
17. Ruger Model 10/22
18. Browning Hi-Power
19. Winchester Model 70
20. S&W K-22 Masterpiece
21. Remington Model 1100/11-87
22. Luger pistols (Model 1900-Model 1923)
23. Savage Model 110 series
24. Walther P38
25. Thompson/Center Contender
26. S&W Model 39/59
27. Thompson sub machinegun
28. Anschutz Model 54
29. Ruger Blackhawk/Super Blackhawk
30. Mossberg Model 500
31. Ruger P-Series pistols
32. Winchester Model 61/62
33. CZ75
34. Ruger No. 1
35. Remington Nylon 66
36. S&W Model 34/63 Kit Gun
37. Remington Model 740/742
38. Ruger GP100
39. Benelli Black Eagle
40. Remington XP-100
41. H&K MP5
42. Browning A-Bolt
43. Dan Wesson revolver series
44. H&R Topper
45. Taurus Total Titanium revolver series
46. S&W AirLite Ti revolver series
47. Straight-line muzzleloaders (all)
48. Taurus Raging Bull .454
49. Kimber Model 1911 series
50. Charter Arms .44 Bulldog

Given such a limited choice, I went with #18, the Browning Hi-Power. I searched the web and found Browning Hi-Power Competition Grade Stainless Steel Pistol Barrels, CNC standard, broach rifled barrels of 416 stainless steel with factory polished feed ramps. Two styles available: Extended-ported (to reduce muzzle climb) and extended-threaded (for attachment of muzzle accessory). All barrels are drop-in replacements so no gunsmithing is required. Threaded barrels are ½ x 28 TPI.

I was halfway home. More looking on the net found the following: To satisfy the requirements of a major US Military Anti-Terrorist unit, AAC has made a number of improvements to the EVOLUTION-9 silencer. The Nielsen Device is now completely integrated within the 1.25 in diameter, aerospace quality aluminum body, yielding a sleek appearance that belies the fact that this is a recoil-assisted design. Improvements to the baffle stack and initial expansion chamber have further reduced first round pop and increased the overall level of sound reduction. The EVOLUTION-9 delivers flawless semi-automatic operation with traditionally recalcitrant Browning inspired designs from Glock, Heckler & Koch, Sig Sauer, and Walther. The EVOLUTION-9 is delivered with a comprehensive operator's manual, takedown tool, and one Nielsen Device piston assembly. Additional piston assemblies are available in ½-28, ½-32, and M13.5 x 1 LH threads so that operators may use their EVOLUTION-9 on a variety of 9mm host firearms. Once again, the EVOLUTION-9 is simply the world's most efficient, high performance, recoil assisted 9mm silencer. Degree of suppression: -34dB (Dry) -41dB (H<sub>2</sub>O).

It was like having a long lost friend come home when I ended up with a Browning Hi-Power. I need some of the 13 round magazines too. One article on the Internet suggested CorBon +P/115gr JHP. The term "flying ashcan" was Speer/CCI's J. Alan Jones' private name, an homage to Dean Grennell but which never gained wide vogue, for the deeper cavity Gold Dots which about 11-12 years ago began to supplant all the previous iterations of handgun JHPs manufactured by Speer/CCI.

Mec-Gar made a flush-fitting 15-round magazine for the Browning Hi-Power for only \$28.50 each, MGBRHP15B – Blue. They were also available in nickel for a couple of dollars more. MidwayUSA had 13-rounders for \$20 but they were backordered. Browning had the 13-rounders for \$40 MSRP. As long as they worked, who cares who made the magazine? Of course by the time I bought the gun, a new barrel, the suppressor, the federal tax stamp, the magazines and the ammo, I'd spent a bundle on a 9mm handgun.

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There was some good news, however. After a major earthquake and 14 nukes had hit the US, the reality shows fell into disfavor. They weren't doing that well in the first place and after, the last thing anyone wanted was another dose of reality. They were theoretically based on one of Arnold's movie, *The Running Man*. I never thought I live to see the day that *The Running Man* was a TV show but after Survivor, Donald's whatever you called it and Martha's spectacular success (gag), reality shows began to disappear. They were being replaced by something worthwhile, cop shows. Go ahead and laugh,



but Adam-12 was used to train new police officers. Milner is retired and fishing. McCord is still making movies and the guy who played Sgt. McDonald died in 2004. The gal who played the radio dispatcher was a moonlighting real life radio dispatcher with LAPD.

“What do you do when Jack gets tired and refuses to go anymore?”

“I get off and walk.”

“What does he do?”

“Goes back to the barn and stands there until I take off his saddle.”

“Who trained whom?”

“He’s stronger than me, taller than me and equally bullheaded. What do you want me to do, sit there for the rest of the day?”

“You could have gotten a horse.”

“This mule doesn’t like to run, he’s perfect. He can walk about 6 miles an hour for forever.”

“Or until he gets tired.”

“Right, whichever comes first. Did you check out that casino yet?”

“Actually, I prefer to play the ponies.”

“How do you pick the hoses you bet on?”

“From the racing form.”

“I have a better way. Pick the odds on favorite and bet him to show. That works about 90% of the time once you get past the 3rd race. Just don’t parlay your bets. I tried that once or twice and got up to about \$300 before the nag decided not to cooperate. Had it back up to \$50 by the last race.”

“What happened?”

“PJ the DJ and I bet \$10 bucks on the favorite to place. It paid \$50. Should have bet the whole \$50.”

“And after?”

“Quit while I was behind.”

“You mean you don’t have a system?”

“Of course I do, I let the other people read the racing forms and figure out who they’ll think will win. And then I bet on the horse to show. Works for me.”

“Then you’re not a gambler.”

“Sure I am, I sit and watch old ladies feed slots and when they give up, invest 20 nickels. When I get it to \$20 I play blackjack until I’m down to \$2 and start over again. I hit a streak in Circus-Circus once and walked out with \$250. I was making minimum bets and every once in a while would put down \$25 or \$50. Had 2 blackjacks and called it a day. I really hate to lose. I played Texas hold ‘em once, does that count?”

“How did it work out?”

“Cleaned me out in about 8 hands. I still don’t understand the game, it all about how you bet. I never knew when to dump a bad hand.”

“Do you watch the World Tournament of Poker?”

“Sure. In the end, one guy ends up with all of the chips and walks away with a bundle of cash. Those expert commentators just confuse me. The odds seem to favor me ending up with a Royal Flush and getting shot like Arnold Rothstein. Besides, Rothstein didn’t get a Royal Flush in real life. He lost \$320 grand, refused to pay and they shot him.”

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“We really should shoot, we’re getting rusty.”

“Buy cans for the machineguns and we’ll try them out. Who knows, they might even fire. Several companies’ makes cans for bolt action .50 caliber guns and Surefire makes can for the M240. I don’t know who makes a can for the M249.”

“Gemtech.”

“Heard from Clarence yet?”

“Nope.”

“He called me and said they found a house in Birmingham. Couldn’t talk long, but I got the impression he wasn’t happy being there.”

“Did you get his number?”

## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 10 – Reunion

“On my computer with everything else.”

“What would you do if you lost your hard disc drive?”

“I put in an external drive, it’s covered.”

A disaster is a natural or man-made event that negatively affects life, property, livelihood or industry often resulting in permanent changes to human societies, ecosystems and environment. Disasters manifest as hazards exacerbating vulnerable conditions and exceeding individuals' and communities' means to survive and thrive. Most events are under the jurisdiction of United States Federal Emergency Management Agency and Department of Homeland Security.

A major earthquake qualified as a natural disaster and a nuclear exchange as a man-made disaster but what did a pandemic qualify as if it didn't affect you? Obviously it was a disaster for the people involved, but if you weren't involved, did you have to count it in your rule of threes count? The rule of threes is personal and it can include deaths in the family or of close friends and even people in the same community. If the US experienced a pandemic and you didn't get sick...

The pandemic couldn't have come at a better time, in retrospect. Attacked as it was on the day the pandemic arrived in the country aboard an Air France flight diverted to Newark, the spread was contained. Hundreds, not thousands or hundreds of thousands contracted the avian flu. About half of them died, but the vaccination of the military and healthcare workers prevented them from spreading the disease. Did the driver bringing the ice from the east coast have it? Later it became apparent that he had the ordinary flu.

Very good news, but that meant we'd only experienced 2 disasters, not 3. The 3 of us initially chalked it up to our receiving the special flu vaccine, but we had been right and the vaccine we received was the run of the mill flu vaccine. Since we'd already been vaccinated, it didn't add to our protection. Maybe Newark is the armpit of the universe, I don't know, never been there.

“Maybe that map you have is wrong.”

“Could be, it was prepared by FEMA over 15 years ago.”

“Could it be we wouldn't get any radiation?”

“I think it most unlikely, unless the Russians attack.”

“Maybe we'll die of old age before the next disaster.”

“And 1,000 years from now some kid discovers the shelter and is pissed because it didn’t contain ray guns? I don’t think so.”

We distributed the MREs to everyone at Moon Shadows, only taking our share. They had gone back into the shelter when it started to warm and they were kept above freezing but at a temperature below 60°. In Lighthouse, we kept them in the shelter, but to tell the truth I couldn’t understand why I insisted on them in the first place, other than to get our fair share. The shelter was designed for 6, not 37 and I’d never do 37 people again. Neither would we eat beans in the shelter. It took an air freshener and 6 months to get rid of the odor. I bought a replacement carbon filter for the LUWA system, once you used them you had to replace them.

“Ron, Gary, how are you?”

“Have any trouble finding the place Clarence?”

“Nope, I did just was you said and looked for a black water tank, a mansion and the servants quarters in the doublewide. What’s in the barn?”

“Hay, horses, a mule, hogs and cattle. Did you look up the Chief of Police and tell him you had 25 years sober?”

“I did.”

“What did he say?”

“Nothing, he was dead.”

“What do you think of our digs?”

“Nice. I wish I had come here instead of going to Birmingham. Most of the people we knew are dead.”

“Clarence, you can never go home again. Believe me, I tried it. Charles City just wasn’t the same.”

“Neither were you.”

“True. I hadn’t thought about that.”

“Do you like the mobile home?”

“They call it manufactured housing these days. With the desert package, it’s well built. R-19 in the walls, etc.”

“Where’s the shelter?”

“Under the house.”

“For 2¢, I sell the house in Birmingham and move here.”

“Here’s a quarter, hurry.”

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It looked like the boss and the hired help after Clarence and Shirley set a doublewide on the other side of Ron’s house. We were getting a little grass now, thanks to the manure and Ron watering the field. Somebody from the water district came around and told Ron to stop watering the field because there was a water shortage. Instead, Ron increased the watering schedule. The man came back and threatened to cut off our water. From that point on, he had water hauled from Lake Mojave for the field. Ron put in a second 10,000-gallon water tank just for the lake water.

Aside from being a little higher and a little cooler, Searchlight was very much like rural Palmdale – desert. Clarence persuaded me to get a saddle horse and use Jack to haul our gear. Not that we were going anywhere, 3 old men in their mid ‘60s with one foot in the grave didn’t have the energy. We pooled our money and suppressed the machineguns. Then we looked and found a canyon where we could practice. It took all three of us to set up the Ma Deuce, and even with the suppressor, it was pretty noisy.

“When did the two of you get Hummers?”

“A while back, Gar-Bear needed a new car and talked me into it.”

“I think I’ll buy a jeep. I saw one at the dealer’s in Las Vegas.”

“What kind is it?”

“A Willys CJ-2A.”

“What year?”

“1946.”

“Does it even run?”

“Barely, I’d have to restore it.”

“Hauling this water is getting expensive; maybe I’d better dig a well.”

“We were talking about Jeeps.”

“So? I got the bill for the water I had hauled from Lake Mojave.”

“And?”

“I could put in a 1,000’ well and be money ahead in a year.”

“Whatever. How long do you think it will take to rebuild the Jeep, Clarence?”

“I’ve got to find a small enough diesel engine and transmission and I can convert it. The guy said it could be done.”

“What kind of engine?”

“Isuzu. They’ve built over 17 million diesel engines.”

“That makes sense; the Jeep beat the Germans and the Japanese. The Germans own Jeep Company and you’re going to put in a Japanese engine and transmission.”

“Right. Why did you put in both central air and a swamp cooler?”

“In case it rains.”

“Have you seen any mutant zombie bikers around?”

“Other than Ron? Nope.”

“It’s a trike, not a bike and was built by Lehman Trikes from a Harley Electra Glide.”

“I had a trike when I was a little kid.”

“The only difference between men and boys is the price...”

“Are the Ott’s and the Floyd’s going to keep up with the Brown’s?”

“I got to fix my Jeep first. How expensive was it?”

“Not so bad, I bought a used Harley Electra Glide in poor condition, had the motor rebuilt and shipped it to Lehman. They did the remainder of the work or farmed it out and I got by for under \$20 thousand.”

“Looks like a Meter Maid trike.”

“It isn’t and it goes like a bat out of hell.”

“Hummer, trike and horse. What next Ronald?”

“I’m digging a well.”

“Can I watch?”

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He should have said he was having a well drilled. Whatever. When the well was in he went to the Water District folks and told them he didn’t need their water. I would have loved to hear that conversation; Ron could be nasty when he wants. I’m sure he didn’t cut off his nose to spite his face; our well could always go dry. He emptied and flushed the lake water tank and hooked it up to the first water tank. We were ready for the next disaster, with water, fuel, my shelter, machineguns and the MREs.

I was eating up the MREs before they got old. They ranged from good to bad, but I had one heck of a pile of little packets of toilet paper. You can never have too many of some things and toilet paper is at the top of my list. Guess why I don’t shop in Montgomery Ward? After we moved to grandpa’s farm in ’48, I thought the outhouse was a thing of the past. And then we went to visit my other grandpa. They didn’t have indoor plumbing until they moved to town in the mid ‘50s.

How long is it safe to store hand grenades? We had a few and I didn’t want them to get old and either go boom or not work when we were attacked by the MZBs. I didn’t need a trike because I had my wheelchair with 6 wheels. I want to thank my 7-9 loyal readers; you read and comment and I’ll keep writing.

“What are you doing now, Ron?”

“Digging a foxhole, Gar-Bear.”

“Why don’t you get a fox to dig it?”

“It wouldn’t be big enough.”

“What do we need fox holes for?”

“In case we’re attacked my MZBs.”

“Relax; I think they’re an urban legend.”

“Was Typhoid Mary an urban legend?”

“No, but she was only responsible for 3 people dying.”

“How can you be sure?”

“I checked snopes.com; they list most of the urban legends.”

“Aren’t you going to help me protect the ranch?”

“Oh, it’s a ranch now?”

“Why not? It has cattle, horses and a ranch house.”

“There is no universally agreed definition of ranch. However, the term is often associated with a farm that:

- raises livestock as a principle part of the business;
- has a large area. A ranch may not need to be large. It may be that some large areas of land are best used for livestock farming; and,
- has a lot of land covered with grass and shrubs. A ranch may not need to have grasses and shrubs. It may be that large areas of land covered with grass and shrubs are suited to livestock farming.”

“Then I was right!”

“Only because there is no universal definition. Why don’t you buy the 5-acres behind the ranch and we’ll double our herd?”

“I could sell my trike and use the money to buy the land. Why do we want a big ranch?”

“I’d hardly call 10-acres a big ranch. If we get more livestock, we’ll have more manure and can grow more grass. We could have 5 acres of alfalfa planted and get someone to bale it in the small bales to feed the animals during the winter. That’s what my father did with the small piece of land he had on the other side of the railroad tracks. He’d plant oats and when he harvested them, the alfalfa would come up. You can always find someone who does custom farming to do the work for you.”

“How much alfalfa can we grow?”

“Maybe 6 tons per acre, if you get lucky. If the small bale weighs 70 pounds, you’d have about 850 bales.”

“The barn isn’t big enough for a lot of cattle.”

“You can let them run the front acreage, Ronald. They’ll come to the barn to eat when they’re hungry or thirsty. A cow eats about ½ a bale of hay a day, less if they’re munching grass. If you grow oats as a cover crop, we’ll have feed for the horses, about 200 bushels.”

“You should have been a farmer.”



“And work for a living? No thank you. The closest I want to come to farming is in my fiction.”

“How old were you when you moved off the farm?”

“November of 1952. I was 9.”

“So you don’t really know a lot about farming?”

“I know how much work it is. I know how easy it is to go broke trying to make a living farming. I know where to look up the facts I need for my stories. I can get by.”

“I, I, I, I.”

*Canta y no llores  
Porque cantando se alegran  
Cielito lindo los corazones*

*Ay ay ay ay Canta* and you do not cry. Because singing the hearts are glad to pretty *Cielito*.

“You speak wetback pretty good.”

“An ill-spent youth in Tijuana.” (Ron’s father went on a binge once a year for 2 weeks in Tijuana when he got his annual vacation.)

o

“What are you eating?”

“A Zero candy bar that Sharon found at Wal-Mart. I think the last time I ate one was in 1961. Caramel, peanuts and almond nougat covered with white chocolate.”

Ronald Lee Ermey was not intended to be in *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). He was on the set to show the actor how to be a sergeant but did such a better job that they hired him to play the part. He served in the US Marine Corps from April 1961 to October 1971 under the service number 195 60 39 and was retired as a Staff Sergeant on a medical disability. Although he retired from the United States Marine Corps in 1971, Ermey was later awarded the honorary rank of Gunnery Sergeant, thus his nickname, The Gunny.

His US Marine Corps awards and decorations include: Meritorious Unit Commendation, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal (w/bronze service star), Vietnam Campaign Medal (w/60 Device), Vietnam Gallantry Cross (w/Palm), Good Conduct Medal (w/2 bronze service stars), Marksman Badge (w/Rifle Bar) and Sharpshooter Badge (w/Pistol Bar). And yes, I can see him in the Movie they make from *Lights Out*. He also appeared in *Father of the pride* playing

Bunny (voice) in episode: *One Man's Meat Is Another Man's Girlfriend* (episode # 1.7)  
26 October 2004.

“Are they good?”

“Try one, not as good as I remembered.”

“Nothing ever is as good as the memory.”

“Gary, what are you eating?”

“Shut up and try one Clarence, she bought 3.”

What does R. Lee Ermey have to do with a Zero Candy bar? You figure it out. He was chosen as first celebrity spokesperson for Glock firearms and products in 2004, does that help? Don't believe that list of firearms, Glock was 6th and the Springfield Armory M1A didn't even make the list. But then, neither did the Colt SAA. *Abe Lincoln may have freed all men, but Sam Colt made them equal.* This post-Civil War slogan would have been music to Sam Colt's ears had he lived long enough to hear it.

You know you're old when you say; *Nothing ever is as good as the memory.* The really sad part is it's true.

o

In order for a story to qualify as Survivalist Fiction, you need action and a disaster. We had 2 disasters, but not a lot of action, so far. The MZBs, hadn't cooperated. Oh, yeah, they got the lights on sooner than planned, about the time we moved to Searchlight. Which was good because otherwise there'd have been no way to pump the water. I bought the horse to replace Jack, solely on the strength of the recommendation of my Ferrier friend. It was a Tennessee Walking Horse that did that funny gait when prompted. I think that Jack was jealous because Sam, my horse, did it better than he did. I named the horse after Sam Colt because the Beretta Stampedes (Uberti) were about as close as I'd ever get to owning Colt revolvers. Davidson's had some, all allocated, at \$1,380 each. For the price of one of those, I had 2 Berettas and some of the price of the Laredoan Crossdraw.

I'd already nuked Lost Wages in some of my stories and China had hit us with a few, so I didn't plan on a nuclear disaster. In some stories, I'd written that the terrorists had nuked us before the Chinese nuked us. I can only conclude that terrorists hadn't read my stories. Lost Wages didn't get nuked, however. Not a whole lot happened as we sat there in Searchlight waiting for the end of the world. I was getting desperate, but God came along and bailed me out. Or maybe it was the other guys who bailed me, we may never know for sure.

“Someone exploded a dirty bomb in Las Vegas.”

“You’re kidding, why would anyone do that?”

“Maybe they don’t like us?”

“It had to be terrorists. Was it a big bomb?”

“How big is big? It blew up and scattered radiation over a 10-block area.”

“That sounds about right. I read somewhere on the net that a dirty bomb would only affect a small area.”

Basically, the principal type of dirty bomb, or Radiological Dispersal Device (RDD), combines a conventional explosive, such as dynamite, with radioactive material. In most instances, the conventional explosive itself would have more immediate lethality than the radioactive material. At the levels created by most probable sources, not enough radiation would be present in a dirty bomb to kill people or cause severe illness. For example, most radioactive material employed in hospitals for diagnosis or treatment of cancer is sufficiently benign that about 100,000 patients a day are released with this material in their bodies.

However, certain other radioactive materials, dispersed in the air, could contaminate up to several city blocks, creating fear and possibly panic and requiring potentially costly cleanup. Prompt, accurate, non-emotional public information might prevent the panic sought by terrorists. The presumed purpose of its use would be therefore not as a Weapon of Mass Destruction but rather as a Weapon of Mass Disruption. It must be true; the Nuclear Regulatory Commission said so. They also licensed Diablo Canyon and Rocky Flats.

*God didn't make Rambo, I made him!* – Trautman

*God don't make no mistakes, that's how He got to be God.* – Archie Bunkie

*God Don't/Didn't Make No Junk.* – Black kid in a movie, I need help, does anyone know which movie? Seems to me the kid might have been speaking to a cop.

o

The dirty bomb going off in Lost Wages wasn’t our 3rd disaster because we weren’t there. The bird flu virus that infected a Vietnamese girl was resistant to the main drug that’s being stockpiled in case of a pandemic, a sign that it’s important to keep a second drug on hand as well, a researcher said Friday. The drug in question, Tamiflu, still attacks “the vast majority of the viruses out there,” said Yoshihiro Kawaoka of the University of Tokyo and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The drug, produced by Swiss-based Roche Holding AG, is in short supply as nations around the world try to stock up

on it in case of a global flu pandemic. In lab tests, the girl's Tamiflu-resistant virus was susceptible to another drug, Relenza, which is made by GlaxoSmithKline.

Power and water began returning to parts of Baghdad early Saturday morning hours after an election-eve insurgent attack plunged 70 percent of the city into darkness.

The insurgents targeted the power grid, blowing up a tower along the main line between Baghdad and Musayyib, the nation's electricity minister told CNN. In addition to the two cities, Beiji also was affected, Muhsin Shalesh said. Are they sure it wasn't the French?

Turkish medical staff on Friday tested nine people for possible bird flu a day after European health officials confirmed what many had long feared - the arrival of the deadly H5N1 strain on Europe's doorstep.

European Union experts held crisis talks on the spread of the bird flu to examine the risk that migratory birds might pose for the 25-nation bloc.

The meeting was expected to approve measures to combat the spread of the disease by requiring EU member states to reduce contact between poultry and wild birds in high risk areas, the EU Commission said. This could include keeping poultry indoors.

The spread of the disease from Asia was a "troubling sign", US Health Secretary Mike Leavitt said, and the world must work harder to prepare for a potential flu pandemic among humans.

The European Commission said on Thursday the bird flu outbreak in Turkey was indeed H5N1 and advised Europe to prepare for a pandemic.

Turkish health officials kept nine people from the western town of Turgutlu under observation and carried out tests after the death of 40 of their pigeons, state-run Anatolian news agency said.

There's a 1 in 3 chance of a major quake – as high as magnitude 8 on the San Andreas and 7 on the San Jacinto – along either of the two faults in the next 30 years, said Cal State San Bernardino professor Sally McGill, who specializes in the region's seismic geology. "No point in San Bernardino is more than four miles from an active fault," McGill said.

Lucy Jones, scientist in charge of Southern California for the US Geological Survey, is more blunt about the area's prospects during a huge quake on one of those two faults. "If you're in San Bernardino, you're toast," she said. "San Bernardino is on two faults, and those buildings will fall down."

The Faults are the San Andreas Fault, the San Jacinto Fault and the Elsinore Fault.

## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 11 – Miscellaneous

They used to call San Bernardino the 'Inland Empire'. Now it was rubble just like Palmdale. The true beauty of a thing is in the eye of the beholder. Like Ron's trike, which by now, he decided to keep. Ammo wasn't the second thing on my list of things you should never run out of, that honor went to Kleenex, which in a pinch, could be used as a substitute for toilet paper. Ammo was third on the list with included cigarettes, coffee, rice, beans and macaroni in that order plus onions, diced tomatoes and chili powder. The only meat item on my list was water packed tuna and the only dairy product was Velveeta. Toilet paper, Kleenex, ammo, cigarettes, coffee, rice, beans macaroni, onions, diced tomatoes and chili powder, and you could get 10 of the 11 items at any grocery store. Since toilet paper and Kleenex were redundant, I didn't worry if I got low on Kleenex. He was always fiddling with it; I presumed rotating his ammo in and out of the box behind the seat.

"Got the Jeep done."

"How did it come out?"

"I think maybe the diesel engine has a shade more horsepower than the 4 cylinder engine it came with. The original engine had 60 horsepower but I managed to fit in a 4JB1 with a minimum of 61 hp. Still 4 cylinder, but the main thing is that it's a diesel."

"So, are we going to get trikes?"

"Ron got an Electra Glide?"

"Started with one and went from there."

"Remember the movie *Electra Glide in Blue*?"

"Robert Blake, I remember."

"Think we could find a couple of ratty Electra Glides and fix them up?"

"As trikes, yeah, but I'll never ride a 2 wheel bike."

"Why not?"

"If you drop it, it takes 3 men and a boy to get it back upright."

"Can we afford to spend that kind of money?"

"Probably not, Gary, but what the hell. Ronald has one so we need them too."

"We'll let him find them; he did really well on his. You know what this means don't you?"

“No, what?”

“We’ll end up being the MZBs.”

“That’s ok, everyone has to be something.”

“I can’t let my hair grow though, it gets really wavy and I don’t want to look like that.”

“Can we mount a rack to carry our guns?”

“We’ll figure something out. What we should do is get a horse trailer and a motorcycle trailer that we can pull with the Hummers. Then we’d be ready for anything that came up. We could be *The Rat Patrol*, remember that show?”

“I tried to figure out if it were pure fiction or based on a true story, Clarence. The closest I could come to figuring it out was that *The Rat Patrol* might have been based on the British Long Range Desert Group (LRDG). I don’t see why we can’t have our own, it will give us something to do besides sit and watch the grass grow.”

o

“To do that, we’d probably have to talk to the Clark County Sheriff and get his opinion. I did some snooping and I think we should attend the Citizen’s Police Academy and then set up a Neighborhood Watch Program, unless you have a better idea. We could install police scanners in our vehicles and keep in touch with business radios. If we discovered a problem for the Sheriff, we could radio home and ask one of our wives to call the Sheriff.”

“Good idea, just because we’re old doesn’t mean we can’t contribute to the community.”

“Rather than get a horse trailer and a motorcycle trailer, why not a 2 horse trailer for each vehicle?”

“You buy them and if I can pull one with my Jeep, I get one too.”

It couldn’t be simple like we’d drive around in our vehicles looking for trouble. No, we had to drag a trailer with a horse and tricycle in it. In order to be reserve deputies we needed to shave 30 years and attend some school to be peace officers. If we did that, we’d be politically correct peace officers. I seemed to remember killing off a politically correct peace officer in my story involving Jenna up near Reno. As far as I know, she’s still buried in the garden. Jim and Becky?

Even the Beretta 92FS rated higher than my Browning Hi-Power, go figure. The M1A rifle was essentially a Garand fitted with a box magazine so maybe the author included it in his list as a Garand. Why was the Garand number 1 anyway? Because that’s the

rifle we used when we helped win WWII? You'll notice that the M1911 was number 2 on the list. Was the Winchester or the Colt the gun that won the west? Didn't matter because I had a pair of Colt knockoffs and a Winchester, a horse named Sam, a mule named Jack and a wheelchair named Salina. Still working on a name for the trike and I was thinking of naming it Blue in honor of Robert Blake.

There isn't any justice anymore, you know. If you kill someone and get acquitted, the family sues for wrongful death and they get a second chance with a lesser burden of proof. You might be innocent, but you still working 3 jobs and eating bologna, like Jerry Reed. The family gets the gold mine and you get the shaft. OJ made a public appearance the other day and 12 people lined up for autographs, eleven more than expected. The Dream Team got most of OJ's money and the families got the rest. On second thought, maybe there is justice; I always thought he did it.

o

That dirty bomb in Las Vegas? The casinos got together and hired private contractors. They had the whole mess cleaned up in 3 weeks. If the government had been in charge, they'd still be waiting for the MREs and ice. Did you see where the Mayor of Atlanta is upset? This being a good neighbor only goes so far. She figures it will cost \$11,000 per family to provide temporary assistance for 6 months. 42,000 families at \$11,000 each; they couldn't do the math, but it's \$462 million. She said talking to FEMA was like talking to a brick wall. Even if they spin off FEMA from DHS, the mindset has already been established. Take care of yourself and go for the low interest loan. In a way, Katrina was the best thing that could have happened. It showed everyone the disadvantages of being unprepared. And, like I always said, the first thing they go after would be the guns...

BTW, insulin will store at room temperature for months. Once you tap the bottle, the clock starts ticking and you have to use the bottle up in 28 days, refrigerated or not. In the refrigerator, I think my Humalin would last up to the expiration date on the bottle. Once opened, it's only good for 28 days, e.g. 1/2 a vial. Assuming you've prepared, you need electricity to preserve the meat and refrigerated foods. You can always light a candle like the Missouri Synod recommends.

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's dream of building a subway to the ocean won't begin with digging. Instead, the work will kick off later this month at a downtown hotel, where a handful of engineers and transit experts will tackle a question that has long stymied Los Angeles' subway system: Is it possible to tunnel below Wilshire Boulevard without blowing anything up? They might not blow up anything, but have you seen the movie *Volcano*? The Fairfax District – home to the bubbling La Brea tar pits – poses a particularly vexing problem for diggers. There's methane gas all over the place in Los Angeles," Waxman said, "but none of the concentration of what we have in the Fairfax area."

Stroll into an expensive department store and walk straight past the \$180 watermelon with a ribbon twirled just so around its stem. Don't bother with the tea in a butterfly-shaped tin for \$153, or with the gift boxes of Belgian chocolates or French cheeses.

If you're looking for a gift that bespeaks elegance and taste, you might try SPAM. The luncheon meat might be the subject of satire back home in the US, but in South Korea, it is positively classy. With \$136 million in sales, South Korea is the largest market in the world for SPAM outside the United States. But here, some consider the pink luncheon meat with its gelatinous shell too nice to buy for themselves, and 40% of the SPAM is purchased as gifts.

Whoever suggested that Harriet Myers was fodder for Congress was probably right; she doesn't seem to stand a snowball's chance in hell. Then George will come long and nominate another conservative Republican female judge and the Senate will have to approve her to avoid being accused of sexual bias. Sounds like something out of the West Wing. And Harriet will go back to being his private counsel, probably with a raise. Once Bush gets his appointee, Republicans, will have selected 7 of the 9 judges with only Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Stephen Breyer having been selected by a Democrat, Willy. Stevens is 85, maybe George will get a 3rd chance.

I haven't had any faith in the US Supreme Court since *Miller* 307US174. This is the only Supreme Court case where the court examined whether the 2nd amendment inhibits the feds from regulating guns, in this case the NFA regulation. Two guys transported a sawed off shotgun through the South (the case even lists the serial number and make) and were charged with violating the NFA. The lower court decided the law violated the 2nd amendment, and let the guys out. They promptly fled, or died, take your pick, and the government pursued an appeal, with no representation for Miller and his buddy. The court decides the law does not on its face violate the second amendment, at least as applied to a sawed off shotgun. The case is mostly ramblings about the meaning of "militia". The court does seem to hold the door open that if it is shown a gun is a "militia weapon" then the 2nd amendment forbids the feds from regulating that weapon. They didn't hold the door open very wide. It didn't prohibit the Assault Weapons Ban. An Assault Weapon is whatever they use to Assault you, maybe it's a bow and arrows. Did you read about the guy who hijacked a train with a bow and arrows?

In a confrontation reminiscent of the Wild West, police shot and wounded a man who allegedly took over a freight train with a bow and arrow. Juventino Vallejo-Camerena boarded the Union Pacific train Sunday night as it was stopped for a signal and threatened the engineer and conductor, the only people on board, police Capt. Keith Jones said. The crew members escaped and disabled the train by turning off fuel switches, then used a cell phone to call police, Union Pacific spokesman Mark Davis said. "The employees did an outstanding job," Davis said. "Their instincts took over and they did the proper thing by disabling the train." Vallejo-Camerena was aboard the train in western San Bernardino County when officers arrived. The man cocked the bow and pointed the arrow at officers, who opened fire, Jones said. Huh?



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“Unit 2, unit 1, I’ve got bad guys at 3 o’clock.”

“What are they doing?”

“Taking a leak next to the road, over.”

“Forget it, they’ll be zipped up and gone before the Sheriff gets here.”

“10-4. Have you seen anything?”

“Negatory good buddy.”

“Unit 1, this is unit 3.”

“Go ahead Clarence.”

“Hey, no names, remember, Ronald?”

“Sorry, unit 3, what?”

“Radio check.”

“Five by five.”

“Unit 3, what is your 20?”

“Unit 2, unit 3. I’m about 150 yards behind the two of you.”

“Rog. Unit 2 clear.”

Have you looked at a road map of the area in and around Searchlight, Nevada? You have US 95 running north and south and Nevada 164 cutting through from the west and ending at Lake Mojave. Searchlight is a few blocks square. The 2 largest things in the area are the Airport and the Cemetery. The Searchlight Museum was next to the Harry Reid Elementary School. We were located west on the Joshua Tree Highway. One guy could cover the entire town in less than 15 minutes.

“Unit 1, unit 2.”

“Go ahead.”

“Were they north bound or south bound?”

“South bound.”

“Rog. Probably unloading some of the free booze.”

“10-4, they’re gone now.”

Searchlight Airport is 1L3, elevation 3,410’, the runway is 5040x70 ft., asphalt in good condition. Runway 16/34 thresholds are marked with 6 green reflectors no lights. 2 single engine aircraft are based at the airport and they average 25 operations a month. They have a radio, CTAF: 122.9. What I don’t understand is why they have a radio. Searchlight Airport is located approximately 70 miles southwest of Las Vegas. The Army Air Corps originally built the airstrip in the early 1950’s, as an emergency alternate paved airstrip for Nellis Air Force Base. The hard-surface runway is located approximately one (1) mile south of the community of Searchlight, Nevada on Highway 95 and just minutes away from Lake Mohave, a recreational area located on the Colorado River. Searchlight Airport offers no services and is uncontrolled, unmanned, and unlighted. I wonder how long they keep you in the holding pattern.

Three old farts? I mean, really! After the shelter experience, we cut way down on beans. We had plenty of SPAM, however. Does anyone know what the shelf life for SPAM is? I’ve got a few cans packed during the past Century, aging. I like SPAM; I think they use it in MREs. The name "SPAM" was chosen in the 1930s when the product, which’s original name – "Hormel Spiced Ham" – was far less memorable, began to lose market share. The name was chosen from multiple entries in a naming contest. A Hormel official once stated that the original meaning of the name SPAM was “Shoulder of Pork and hAM”.

Other explanations of the origin of the term include the acronym “Specially Processed Assorted Meat”, “Spiced Pork And hAM”, “Specially Processed Army Meat”, and “SPare hAM”; there are also some less-than-serious explanations, such as “Synthetically Produced Artificial Meat”, “Some Parts Are Meat”, or “Stuff Posing As Meat”. The current official explanation is the SP and AM were taken from “SPiced hAM” to win a \$100 prize. As of 1997 there were over 5 BILLION tins sold. The shelf life – indefinite. Often imitated, never replaced, remember Treet? Armour’s answer to George Hormel. It’s still around.

◦

“Hey, Gary, did the face that launched 1,000 ships really exist?”

“How would I know?”

“I thought maybe you dated her.”

“What are you two talking about?”

“Gary’s old girlfriends.”

“It’s time to go on patrol.”

“Again?”

“The streets have been safe ever since we started the patrol.”

“The streets were safe before we started the patrol.”

“Good, let’s keep them that way.”

“Why didn’t you cut a hole in the top of your Hummer for a machinegun mount?”

“I didn’t have a hole saw?”

“Why don’t we leave the vehicles at home and just ride our horses?”

“Why don’t we leave our horses home and just ride our trikes?”

“Why don’t we just stay home?”

“Clarence, I want to ride my horse and Ron wants to ride his trike. Why don’t you take your Jeep? We can stay in touch with the Motorola CP200s and your CM300.”

“Can’t we just watch the neighborhood from here?”

“All you can see from here is our 3 homes. Fire up your diesel Jeep and shake a leg.”

“Which do you want me to do first?”

“Yes.”

◦

“I have bandits at 2:00.”

“Is it that late already?”

“This looks like a bad bunch, I may need help. Join up on me.”

“Fine, where are you?”

“About 150-yards in front of the two of you.”

“What are they doing?”

Ron didn't answer because I rode up on him on Sam. Clarence was only about 10' behind."

"Whadya got?"

"Do those guys look like mutant zombie bikers to you?"

"Nah, they're riding Kawasaki's. A real MZB would ride a Harley, like we do."

"You're riding a horse and Clarence has his Jeep. I'll go see what they're up to."

"Well?"

"They're just sitting there drinking Coors Light."

"What did you expect with them having Kawasaki's?"

"I figured they'd be drinking Bud."

"Maybe they're afraid of werewolves."

"Why would you think that, Clarence?"

"Don't they call Coors Light the Silver Bullet?"

"Yeah, so?"

"Forget it."

o

"Gar-Bear, put on your TV, quick."

"It's already on."

"What are you watching?"

"Fox News."

"Then you know?"

"I do. I think it's going to blow. That resurgent dome has started to grow about like Mt. St. Helen's did back in 1980. I always said it would blow. It was just a matter of time."

"Do you think we'll be ok here?"

“That’s hard to say, Ron. The Bishop tuff extends over all but the northern part of the state. I always wrote in my stories that the place to be if it blew was in Reno. Hang on while I look it up on the Internet. It says here that Searchlight is 271 miles from Mammoth Lakes on a heading of 122.1°. That’s way outside of the range of pyroclastic flows and the heavy ash falls. We’ll probably need the N-95 or N-100 masks for a few days, but I think we’ll be ok.”

“I’ll tell Clarence, he just walked in, looking worried.”

“Are we full up on everything we need?”

“Lyn and I were going grocery shopping up in Vegas.”

“Let’s go to Henderson, its closer.”

“Sure, they’re all the same. Clarence and Shirley are coming too.”

“I get Sharon and we’ll follow you. Better yet, you follow me; I drive just a hair faster.”

“Thirty minutes to go 43 miles?”

“I was in a hurry. We didn’t get pulled over did we?”

“The Sheriff is probably busy trying to evacuate Las Vegas.”

“Won’t do him any good. If the ash is the same as that last time, it will extend to Mexico. What level were they at?”

“Orange.”

“Condition ORANGE (WARNING) will be initiated when the geophysical data suggest that an eruption may breakout within a few hours to days. We could have plenty of time or it may have already gone to Red. If they go to Red, it could be a level 1-4 event.”

“What’s the difference?”

“Sort of like the difference between pop and KABOOM. The worst it can get is an explosive eruption characterized by an eruption column reaching or exceeding 25 km above eruption vent(s); a hazardous zone subject to pyroclastic flows or surges may extend 20 km or more from eruption vent(s); ash cloud pervading most aircraft flight paths over the region; and, heavy downwind ash fall.”

“Why didn’t we know sooner?”

"We're in Nevada. I seem to recall that until it gets to Orange, only California is notified. I have the Long Valley Caldera Response Plan on my computer together with a paper on Yellowstone that shows the various ash fields."

"All this from your research for your stories?"

"Sort of comes in handy once in a while. This could really screw up the growing season so we'd better plan on staples and smokes for a while."

"Are we going to have trouble?"

"I'll have to check my crystal ball when I get home, Clarence. I sort of figure Nevada's economy will go into the toilet for a while. Everyone is going to be worried that there is residual radiation from the dirty bomb topped by 3' of ash."

"They're limiting cigarettes, you know."

"Are you wearing your gun?"

"Yep."

"It shouldn't be a problem. We ask very politely for them to wave the limits due to the pending disaster. We have to be discreet; I don't think we're allowed to wear the guns into the store. Everyone buy one double pack of the Kirkland maximum strength Allergy Sinus non-aspirin medicine. Sharon uses it every day and they limit you to one double pack."

"What's in it?"

"500mg Tylenol, 2mg Chlor-Trimeton and 30mg Sudafed. They're afraid you make speed out of the stuff."

"Expensive?"

"\$4 for the double pack of 192 caplets."

"We'd better hurry, it's almost 50 miles home."

"43 miles."

"That's the same."

"Don't forget the toilet paper."

"Right."

## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 12 – Who is Jerry Reed?

Smokey and the Bandit...

*East bound and down, loaded up and truckin'  
a'we gonna do what they say can't be done  
We've got a long way to go and a short time to get there  
I'm east bound just watch ol' Bandit run*

*Keep your foot hard on the peddle...son, never mind those brakes  
let it all hang out cause we've got a run to make  
The boys are thirsty in Atlanta, and there's beer in Texarcana  
and we'll bring it back no matter what it takes*

*East bound and down, loaded up and truckin'  
a' we gonna do what they say can't be done  
We've got a long way to go and a short time to get there  
I'm east bound just watch ol' Bandit run .....*

*Old Smokey's got them ears on, he's hot on your trail  
and he ain't gonna rest 'till you're in jail  
So you gotta dodge him.... you gotta duck him  
just keep that diesel truckin....  
just put that hammer down and give it hell*

*East bound and down, loaded up and truckin'  
a' we gonna do what they say can't be done  
We've got a long way to go and a short time to get there  
I'm east bound just watch ol' Bandit run*

Gold Mines and Shafts...

*Well, I guess it was back in '63,  
When eatin' my cookin' got the better of me.  
So I asked this little girl I was goin' with to be my wife.  
She said she would, so I said "I do"  
But I'd have said, "I wouldn't", if I'd just knew  
How sayin' "I do" was gonna screw up all of my life.*

*Well, the first few years weren't all tha bad.  
I'll never forget the good times we had.  
'Cause I'm reminded every month when I send her the child support.  
Well, it wasn't too long 'til the lust all died, and I'll admit I wasn't too surprised,  
When I come home and found my suitcase sittin' out on the porch.  
Well, I tried to get in, she'd changed the locks.*

*Then, I found a note taped on the mailbox that said,  
"Goodbye, Turkey. My attorney will be in touch".  
So I decided, right then & there.  
I was gonna do what's right: give her her fair share.  
But, brother, I didn't know her share was gonna be that much.*

*She got the gold mine. I got the shaft.  
They split it right down the middle, and they give her the better half.  
Well it all sounds sorta funny, but it hurts too much to laugh.  
She got the gold mine. I got the shaft.*

*Now listen, you ain't heard nothin' yet!  
Why, they give her the color television set,  
Then they give her the house, the kids, and both of the cars.  
Then they started talkin' about child support, alimony, and the cost of the court.  
Didn't take long to figure out how far in the toilet I was.  
I'm tellin' ya, they have made a mistake,  
'Cause it adds up to more than this cowboy makes.  
Besides, everything I've had worth taken, they've already took.  
While she's livin' like a queen on alimony,  
I'm workin' two shifts & eatin' bologna,  
Askin' myself, "Why didn't you just learn how to cook?!"*

*They give her the gold mine. They give me the shaft.  
They said they's splittin' it all down the middle, and she got the better half.  
Well, it all sounds mighty funny, but it hurts too much to laugh,  
She got the gold mine. I got the shaft.*

*She got the gold mine. I got the shaft.  
They split it right down the middle, and they give her the better half.  
Well, I guess it all sounds funny, but it hurts too much to laugh.  
She got the gold mine. I got the shaft.*

*I got your shaft. Well, I don't have to worry about totin' a billfold,  
no more. I let my wife tote it; I'm gonna be carryin' food stamps.  
You get it, judge? oh wait, That's not funny, huh? Judge?  
Contempt of court?! what you mean...Judge...*

That Jerry Reed. In 1967, he notched his first chart hit with *Guitar Man*, which Elvis Presley soon covered. After Presley recorded another of Reed's songs, *US Male*, the songwriter recorded an Elvis tribute, *Tupelo Mississippi Flash*, which proved to be his first Top 20 hit. After releasing the 1970 crossover hit *Amos Moses*, a hybrid of rock, country and Cajun styles, Reed teamed with Atkins for the duet LP *Me and Jerry*. During the 1970 television season, he was a regular on the Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour, and in 1971 he issued his biggest hit, the chart-topper *When You're Hot, You're Hot*, which was also the title track of his first solo album. In the mid-1970s, Reed's recording



career began to take a backseat to his acting aspirations, and in 1974, he co-starred with his close friend Burt Reynolds in the film *W.W. and the Dixie Dancekings*.

While he continued to record throughout the decade, his greatest visibility was as a motion picture star, almost always in tandem with headliner Reynolds. After 1976's *Gator*, Reed appeared in 1978's *High Ballin'* and 1979's *Hot Stuff*. He also co-starred in all three of the *Smokey and the Bandit* films. The first, which premiered in 1977, landed Reed a No. 2 hit with the soundtrack's *East Bound and Down*. In 1979, he released a record comprised of both vocal and instrumental selections, *Half & Half*. In 1982, Reed's career as a singles artist was revitalized by the chart-topping novelty hit, *She Got the Goldmine (I Got the Shaft)*, followed by *The Bird*, which peaked at No. 2.

A fan? Absolutely! I like Winchester lever action rifles, SAA revolvers and Country Western Music. I used to like the Boston Celtics, until Bill Russell retired. Then Dale Earnhardt died and I gave up on sports altogether. I live in the past 'cause I don't like the present. I'm so old fashioned; I'm a Brooklyn Dodgers fan. And yes, I'd drive to Texas for a semi load of beer, as long as it was Coors and I wasn't dodging ash from the Long Valley Caldera.

◦

Let's talk about the eruptive history for the Mono-Inyo Craters volcanic chain for the past 5,000 years. Eruption volumes have all been relatively small (generally less than 0.1 km<sup>3</sup> (0.024 mi<sup>3</sup>) compared with the 0.25 km<sup>3</sup> (0.06 mi<sup>3</sup>) for the magmatic component of the May 1980 Mount St. Helens eruption). Several of the explosive eruptions, however, have produced pyroclastic flows extending as far as 8 km (5 miles) from the vent. Phreatic, steam blast produced by superheated ground water; basalt, a hot, fluid lava that solidifies into dark volcanic rock containing 54 to 62 percent silica (typical of the lavas erupted by Hawaiian volcanoes); rhyolite, a viscous, gas-rich lava that solidifies into light-colored volcanic rock or obsidian (volcanic glass) with 69 to 80 percent silica (SiO<sub>2</sub>).

It was never a question of whether the caldera would erupt again; rather it was a question of when. Right now was when it let loose; bigger than the last time 760,000 years ago. That time it erupted 145mi<sup>3</sup>/580km<sup>3</sup> of lava and ash. This time it approached the eruption of Yellowstone 640,000 years ago, yielding ~240mi<sup>3</sup>/1,000km<sup>3</sup> of lava and ash in an explosive rhyolitic eruption. The experts asserted, explosive eruptions of rhyolitic lava could range in volume from small to moderate like those that formed the Inyo and Mono Domes to much larger (but less likely) volumes like those that formed Mammoth Mountain and the Mammoth Knolls north of Mammoth Lakes. During their initial explosive phases, the more energetic of these eruptions typically produced large volumes of coarse pumice deposited as a thick blanket of tephra over a wide region, as well as destructive pyroclastic flows and surges capable of causing severe damage to distances of at least 20 km (12 miles) from a vent. The later phases of such eruptions produced steep-sided lava flows and domes.

They had enough instrumentation at Long Valley Caldera (LVC) to cover a flight to the moon. Which, in light of recent misadventures beginning with Katrina in 2005, wouldn't happen anytime soon. Maybe we'd reach Mars in 2100, if anyone still wanted to go. The planet earth had been experienced earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and typhoons at an increasing rate. The USGS figured Alaska would be next to go; man did they get a surprise. A few months earlier, they had gone to high green level and a couple of weeks before, yellow. California started to move people but Nevada didn't seem too concerned. The Orange alert changed that and areas included in the area of the Bishop Tuff, especially the heavily populated areas, began gearing up to evacuate.

We've all seen how well those work. New Orleans was a washout, literally and figuratively. Rita got a better response. There was no evacuating the  $M_w$  8.2 quake in California until after the fact. Where could you go and not run into radioactive fallout? The 3 of us stayed around, guarded the ruins and got out of town as soon as we could. I figured we be ok 271 miles from Long Valley. I should have shined my crystal ball better.

The pyroclastic flow went 35-40km and the really heavy ash fall 200km, around 120 miles. Figure us at about 436km. We could see the cloud of ash when it got really high using binoculars. We could see it spreading out and headed generally in our direction, to the east. Then it got dark, we lost the light and our view.

"What do you think?"

"Maybe to be on the safe side, we ought to feed the livestock extra feed and spend a night down below. Now that I put in that closed circuit TV camera, we can look around before we have to come back to the surface."

"Gary, will it really be that bad?"

"Clarence, I have no idea. According to Fox and CNN, it's still erupting. It isn't radioactive and we can come up, if for nothing more than to clean the ash off our roofs."

"It don't rain much."

"True, but if it does, the ash will weigh 10 times as much and our homes are manufactured housing not intended for much of a snow load."

"How are you going to get the ash off the roofs?"

"We could hose them off, starting at the bottom and working our way up."

"That will create one hell of a mess, partner."

"Better around the house instead of inside the house. The only problem I see is that stuff almost turns to concrete when it gets wet and dries. We have to wash it away from the houses."

“Do we have enough water pressure?”

“What are the specs on the 2 used pumps you installed in case we had a fire?”

“They’re Paco water pumps model 11-460121 with 1,500gpm and a 70’ head w/ 3phase induction motors by Toshiba International Corporation drawing 230/ 460volts 48/ 96amps @ 1775rpm using 40hp 60hz motors. If we use a 1½” line and the fire nozzles, we can clean everything off in a hurry.”

“How about steak, baked potatoes and salad for dinner? If you want beans, you can eat at home and sleep in your own beds.”

“Get some of those New York Strips as Costco?”

“You only live once.”

o

We dusted off the shelter and started the oven to bake the spuds. I didn’t bother with the chemical filter for the LUWA system, figuring the HEPA filters would be enough. The shelter isn’t half bad when you only have 6 people sharing 500ft<sup>2</sup>. It sure wasn’t like the last time. I figured Amy and Lorrie would get smart quick and head to San Diego. According to my map of the Bishop Tuff, San Diego would only get a light dusting unless the wind changed. When Amy called on Sharon’s cell phone I told her to go south and not come here, she’d be driving right into the ash fall. Then came the request, they were short of cash. I figured \$500 would buy them enough gas to get to San Diego and David and Lorrie had all of my camping equipment. So I talked it over with Sharon and we wired \$750 or \$375 apiece. You have to cut the apron string sometime.

After supper, I fired up the radio shack to listen to the chat on the ham bands. The others were glued to the TV. When it gets dark and they can’t give you live feeds, they switch to earlier footage, remember Katrina when they showed those guys waiving the help sign for 3 days? They said to hell with it and put on a movie (*Volcano* w/ Tommy Lee Jones). I was listening to a ham in Reno and they were getting ash this time around. Reno is only 140 miles/224km from Mammoth Lakes on a heading of 341.4°, north-northwest. The direction may have explained why the area was spared the previous time.

Air around the center of a high-pressure system in the northern hemisphere flows clockwise and air around the center of a low-pressure system in the northern hemisphere flows counter-clockwise. When the two collide in the Midwest you get storms. When the two collide over eastern Nevada and western Utah just as the LVC blows its lid, you have a real mess and ash goes every which way. The ash that gets high makes it to the jet stream and they don’t call it the jet stream because it moves slowly. The term “jet stream” is often used to refer to the rivers of wind high in the atmosphere –

above about 20,000 feet – that steer storms. Strictly speaking, as noted in the American Meteorological Society's Glossary of Weather and Climate, a jet stream is *a relatively narrow river of very strong horizontal winds (usually 50 knots or greater) embedded in the planetary winds aloft*. Air rises in a high-pressure area and falls in a low-pressure area. 20,000' is only a shade over 6km and the ash column was pushing 30km.

CTAF (Common Tower Advisory Frequency) isn't really a *radio service* at an airport – it's more of a designated frequency to use for airplanes to announce to each other what they're doing. It's similar to reporting on Unicom, if you're familiar. Unicom I've heard of thanks Doc, for the heads up. I don't like to fly and haven't for a very long time. What goes up must come down. Which, of course, is fine if you know how to fly and the plane is under control. I'll admit, I've never been on a plane that crashed, but there's that law they call the law of averages. I'm quitting while I'm ahead.

o

“What do you see?”

“Nothing, it's still dark.”

“Turn on the floodlights, dummy.”

“I flipped the switch and nothing happened.”

“That's the problem with 4-way light circuits, if one of the switches in a halfway position, the lights go off, but none of the other switches work.”

“We have a lots of 4-ways circuits.”

A 4-way switch is used when you need 3 or more switched to control the same fixture(s). You can add as many 4-way switches to the circuit as you need or want. For 4-way switch wiring, you will need two 3-way switches (one at each end) and then as many 4-way switches, as you want in between. Two-wire cable runs from the light to the first switch, and then 3-wire is run between all the switches. Clarence and I had the end switches and the shelter, Ron and the light pole had the 4-way switches. It could have been any of our faults. A correct term because an electrical fault is an unintended open or ground. However, it was more probable that Clarence or I had left a switch in a half-way position.

Side note: Before I'd heard of George Santayana, I was a very poor student of history. When I had a website, I had a page of quotes. The website is on my computer never to see the light of day again. I'll reproduce them:

*To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven. – Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3, Verse 1*

*The very essence of the creative is its novelty, and hence we have no standard by which to judge it.* – Carl R. Rogers

*Nothing happens by itself... it all will come your way, once you understand that you have to make it come your way, by your own exertions.* – Ben Stein

*An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come.* – Victor Hugo

*Rather fail with honor than succeed by fraud.* – Sophocles

*Respect for the truth comes close to being the basis for all morality.* – Frank Herbert

*Those who stand for nothing fall for anything.* – Alexander Hamilton

*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.* – George Santayana

*If you want something too much, you will not succeed in getting it.* – J. P. Morgan

*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.* – Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Friendship is the hardest thing in the world to explain. It's not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything.* – Muhammad Ali

*It requires wisdom to understand wisdom: the music is nothing if the audience is deaf.* – Walter Lippman

*Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity.* – Hanlon's Razor

*A person who can't pay, gets another person who can't pay, to guarantee that he can pay.* – Charles Dickens

*Imagine the Creator as a standup comedian - and at once the world becomes explicable.* – H. L. Mencken

Here's my biography from the website:

Gary's career began with the state of Iowa's Department of Revenue and Finance in 1973. During his tenure with the Department of Revenue, Gary performed corporate income tax audits on a majority of the Fortune 500 companies. He also served as a Field Supervisor, and later as a senior member of Iowa's Out-of-State Audit Team. During his period of service from 1985 to 1992, Gary designed, programmed and implemented the first Clipper-compiled dBase III computer audit program (*The Iowa Auditor*) used by the

Department of Revenue. He was subsequently selected to implement usage of the program on a nationwide basis by the Out-of-State Audit Unit.

Gary's audit experience led him to leave the Department of Revenue and Finance to expand his career to include Individual Income Tax Return Preparation and Excise Tax Return Preparation. His new career as an Excise Tax Consultant included such exercises as preparation of Business Plans and analysis of field audit techniques applicable to each of the 40+ states imposing an Excise Tax.

Starting with a small customer base in the San Francisco area, Gary utilized his Excise Tax expertise to help clients resolve registration and filing issues with the various states. That effort culminated with the development of a multi-state Excise Tax audit program based on *The Iowa Auditor* computer program and utilizing Vertex Sales/Use tax rate database. The complexities of identifying and importing necessary invoice data into the program's databases lead to the cancellation of the software development project during 1996.

Gary's latest challenge is programming web sites, specifically, this web site. Every time he sees another *new* or *neat* feature, he has to reprogram this web site. Nearly every page on this web site gets *updated* daily. He still manages to work 10-12 hours a day on business matters.

A 1970 graduate of Wartburg College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business and Economics, Gary enrolled in Drake University where he entered the MBA program. He received his MBA degree from the Drake Graduate School of Business in 1972.

I did well in the college class I had on propaganda. Aside from being slanted, the biography is accurate. At Drake, I attended Law School. I quit when it gave me ulcers. My younger brother, in the same class, didn't. He died in 1992 from non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

More than you didn't want to know: In order that I become capable of making the sales/use tax audits, I was given a whirlwind course on sales/use tax auditing. I concluded that when all was said and done, the state of Iowa only used 4 methods to perform audits, the detailed audit and 3 types of projections. I laid it out on paper and wrote a computer program in the dBase III language to do it for me. Reason: I was lazy. In the process, I learned to be a very good auditor. Most of us never really examine what we do closely. In retrospect, I know where I went wrong on *The Iowa Auditor*. It became complicated when Iowa added local option sales tax. I tried to incorporate the local taxes into the program. What I should have done was made the local tax computation a separate module that only computed the local option taxes when the program compiled the liability. Hindsight is 20/20; now, ask me if I care.

o

WilliAnn Moore, president of the Toledo NAACP chapter, had said she worried the march would exacerbate an already tense situation, and urged black youths to ignore the demonstrators. Local leaders were taking steps "so this doesn't turn into some kind of race war," she said. War! War!

"This never should have happened," 80-year-old Ed Kusina, who has lived in the neighborhood nearly all his life, said Sunday. "They should have never let them march here."

I hate to rain on his parade, but they call it the 1st Amendment and the ACLU will defend the right of Nazi's to march, Ed must have forgotten. Andrew Sheppard said it best in the first part of his speech, right before he stomped on the 2nd Amendment. Hey Mikey, there are 27 Amendments now, not just one. If someone wants to burn the flag, that's their right, it's also my right to conduct target practice anywhere I choose. My defense will be that I went temporarily insane and did it on the spur of the moment during heightened passion in response to an uncontrollable urge. The glove doesn't fit! You'll know I done it, 'cause that sucker will be dead. What conflict? I believe in the 1st Amendment, right up until they I'm po'd.

◦

*B: Snowman, you got your ears on?*

*S: You lucky devil, you got him! Where the hell are you?*

*S: You know who that is? That's Mr. Evil Knievel. He snuck in my back door, son, when I wasn't lookin'. You better flip-flop back here and gimme' a hand, son, or we gonna be in a heap of trouble. Please roger that transmission!*

*S: Hoss, you ain't gonna believe this, but that crazy som bit just tried to drive right up under my truck!*

*B: What do you think they do for excitement in this town?*

*S: Probably sit around and watch the cars rust.*

*S: Bandit, what are we gonna do about all this beer we took?*

*B: Leave them a note and tell them to send the bill to Big Enos Burdette.*

*G: Drink it! (6½ years and I still think about it.)*

That Jerry Reed! I always wanted one of those Bandit Special Editions. Wanting and having are 2 different things. In '63, I wanted an XKE. I made \$200 a month and they cost \$7,000.

◦

“Ron, you got your ears on?”

“Rog.”

“It was the switch in my house. The visibility is about 600 yards.”

“How do you know that?”

“I practiced a lot at 600-yards.”

“Hit anything?”

“Nope.”

“Clarence, come back.”

“Whatchu want, Gary?”

“Radio check. TOM clear.”

“Who is Tom?”

“Never mind.”

“Can we come topside?”

“Yeah, shut everything but the radios down.”

“Crap, I have ash on my glasses.”

“Wash them, don’t wipe them, you’ll scratch th..”

“Crap.”

“Do you have a spare pair?”

“Of course, I’m prepared.”

“Lucky you.”



## The Three Amigos Part X – Chapter 13 – Dusty

Sunni leaders responded angrily, some of them saying they suspected fraud and accusing American officials and the Shi'ite parties that dominate the government.

"There is no doubt that America has interfered in the process, since they and the Shi'ite government are supervising the whole operation, and since both want this draft to pass," al-Kubaisi said.

There you go. If you lose, call it voter fraud. The winner always says it's a proper election and the loser usually complains of fraud.

o

We have had our 3 disasters and the story would be complete except for the fact that we hadn't survived this disaster, yet. We weren't short on supplies and when the lights went out, again, we'd never even noticed the generators kicking in. I had Ron shut down everything except the radios because they were my only set and the shelter already diverted enough power. There was the refrigerator, freezer and the motor(s) on the LUWA filter still running along with the radios.

"Wash them, don't wipe them, you'll scratch them."

"I already found out."

"What were you thinking? I told you that volcanic ash was just tiny little rocks with very sharp edges. Even a light dusting of volcanic ash poses a health hazard to people and animals and damage crops, electronics, and machinery. Heavy ash fall, such as that from a large caldera forming eruption, would devastate the surrounding area and affected areas downwind."

"Maybe I wasn't thinking; did that ever occur to you? No one is perfect, including you."

"I try."

"That's part of your problem and it's one of your character defects. Just for once in your life, accept things as they are and don't try to make them perfect. When a weapon misfires, you eject the defective cartridge and go to the next one. There isn't much point to continually trying to get the bad cartridge to fire."

"What if I'm down to my last bullet?"

"Use your bayonet. It's not on the end of your rifle so you can pick your nose."

*Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity. – Hanlon's Razor – In other words, if the shoe fits, wear it.*

Bayonet? Yeah, we ordered the different flashhiders for the M14 that had the bayonet lugs. The rifles might just as well be totally illegal. We even bought the M6 bayonets with the olive-drab fiberglass body with steel throat and drag. My son always says that if you get close enough to use a bayonet, you're too close.

◦

### Plumbers v. Electricians

The lights won't come on in your 3-way circuit. The electrician comes out, looks and finishes flipping the switch. His charge is \$40 because he knows to flip the switch.

The water won't run and the plumber comes out. He looks and says the charge will be \$40 for the service call and \$40 to rectify the problem. When he gets your check, he turns the knob to turn the water back on. The plumbers must have a stronger union. The other difference is that if you lose a little Freon, the plumber wants \$40 for the service call, \$100/pound for the Freon and so much a pound to let it go from his bottle into your lines. He doesn't know that you know a guy who will sell you all the Freon you want for \$12 a pound. And, since you watched him connect the lines before you told him NO, you can do it yourself. A membership to DIY.com would be cheaper than paying the plumber. They have a right to make a living, but why does every customer have to pay for a semester in college for one of his kids?

◦

How Jerry Reed's *Live Still* got its name (scroll down). He had open-heart surgery and one of the networks reported he died and when the funeral was. The title was, in part, to reassure his fans that he was still alive and kicking. Sharon and I remain convinced that he once worked for WHO radio in De Moines. He didn't, but you know how old memories are, bad... The nearest we can figure is that we have Jerry Reed and Jerry Reno mixed up. Jerry Reno is the Weather Man, not The Guitar Man. He is 68.

◦

"I thought the bayonet was to slice through fences."

"Wrong bayonet and it worked in conjunction with the sheath."

"Oh." (Unlike Mr. Reed, I need a nit, to pick.)

The M9 Bayonet is a multi-purpose knife and bayonet officially adopted in 1984 by the US. It is issued with a special sheath designed to double as a wire cutter, developed by Qual-A-Tec (later development and production by Phrobis III) from the Buck Buckmaster line. The design had some origins in designs for SEAL teams and the Rambo movies. The basic design was originally a commercial product (Buck 184), but it was devel-

oped into a model to compete in the new bayonet competition (after the request for proposals (RFP) was put out). The design was later sold commercially as the Buck 188, though the design was widely copied and sold by other makers. In 1986 a patent on Buckmasters' that had been applied for was granted, to help cut-down on knockoffs. There have been many versions, and many makers of the M9. It is used by the US, some other countries, and has also been sold commercially (in various versions).

The M9 Bayonet partially replaced, but is used in addition to the older M6 and M7 Bayonets, introduced in 1957 and 1964 respectively. Many troops have retained the M7, since the M9 has a reputation for breakage, due to a combination of its relatively thin blade, and varying quality among the various contractors used. The M11 bayonet, or M11 EOD, is a version of the M9 specialized for EOD. It has some extra features, such as a hammer pommel, but uses the same knife and scabbard as the M9.

o

We speculated that we'd still be getting ash a day or two after the eruption stopped. The winds on the backside of the low were circulating the ash in our direction and being stalled we got more ashfall than one might have expected. The weather wasn't cooperating, but finally the high weakened and the low pushed through. With the low gone, the wind blew out of the west and the ash finally died down.

"Look at it this way, Gary; at least our lawns are paved."

"Clarence, I swear you find something good to say about the Devil, himself."

"He's grumpy today, Clarence, you'd better leave him alone."

"Why?"

"His Internet connection is down and the guy in Bombay didn't know why."

"If he was talking to India again, we'd better swing him a wide loop. They always leave him po'd with being politely stupid. He really gets angry when they call him Mr. Oat."

"Why are you talking about me that way? I'm right here."

"Did either of us say anything that wasn't true?"

"No."

"There you have it."

"What do I have?"

"Why are you giving me the 3rd degree?"

“I’m going to clean my crystal ball so I can find out when the ash is going to stop.”

“Wash it, don’t wipe it, you’ll scratch it.” (Our new mantra.)

When dry ash falls onto areas without vegetation cover or on paved surfaces it is easily stirred up by wind and human activities (for example, moving vehicles and agricultural practices). Wet ash, however, usually exhibits cohesive properties that can dramatically decrease such reworking and disturbance. The resistance to wind erosion of compacted ash will increase as grains nest more tightly together.

Mount St. Helens' 1980 ash showed initial resistance to wetting as water beaded on its surface. However, this resistance lasted for only a few hours in light rain and was eliminated by heavy rain in minutes. After initial wetting, an undisturbed ash layer may remain persistently wet. This is due to the inefficient water drainage from between the surfaces of ash grains, which are particularly angular. Raindrops impacting on an ash layer contribute to rapid compaction through decreasing porosity. Pore space saturation will then occur relatively rapidly during heavy rain.

In the 1964 Irazu eruption in Costa Rica fine-grained soft, loose ash formed a hard impervious surface crust thought to be a result of precipitation of soluble salts by evaporation.

We had it all, when the ash began to fall during daylight hours, the sky turned increasingly hazy and dusty and sometimes a pale yellow color. The falling ash was so dense that daylight turned to murky gray and later an intense blackness such that it was impossible to see your hand when held up close to the eye. Loud thunder and lightning and the strong smell of sulfur occurred during the ash fall. Furthermore, rain accompanied the ash and turned the tiny particles into a slurry of slippery mud. You could describe it as an intense quietness, except for thunder that may accompany the ash fall, giving deadness to the normal sounds of life. The rain helped settle the ash.

The most serious problems to communications systems result from the conductive and abrasive properties of ash. Measures that can help prevent ash falls impacting greatly on communications systems include:

- Teflon insulators should be replaced with ceramic insulators to prevent dust shorting out the communication system.
- Plastic switches and push buttons also need to be replaced as these abrade quickly.
- Seal up repeater stations and other installations; shut air intakes; internal air circulation and leakage should be sufficient for cooling.
- Install covers; plastic tarp will do in an emergency.

We couldn’t hose off the electrical lines coming to the property. And the light rain didn’t wash off the accumulated damp ash. Not that it mattered because we had generators. A propane generator is a great thing to have when the lights go out, but electricity from the

electrical company is cheaper. Propane was expensive and we were on fixed incomes. The retail price of propane is nearly double the wholesale price. The wholesale price of propane had slowly risen and was sitting at around \$1.75; on 9/30/05 it was \$1.19. Why is electricity cheaper? The DOE says it isn't considering the price on the basis of BTUs. It's cheaper because an engine doesn't use the BTUs in a gallon of propane with total efficiency and they're comparing apples and oranges. The one thing they don't emphasize is the efficiency of a generator.

The downside of the thunderstorms was the risk we had for a lightning strike. I had Alpha Delta surge protectors on everything and standby power supplies in addition to the generators. A computer or radio can crash in the time it takes a generator to kick in. 500w seemed to be a reasonable balance to allow the generator to stabilize. In Palmdale, I had a Best 1.7kw UPS that plugged into the one special outlet I had in my office. When I returned home from my 2nd childhood, the thing wouldn't work and I never fixed it. It was a true UPS, not one of those standby power sources. This time around, I went with APC because they were cheap, both inexpensive and of questionable quality, but they only need to work for 5 minutes or less. No, I didn't say they were junk! Read my lips. (I'm not a presidential candidate.)

On the subject, a standby power supply is a good choice these days because they use microprocessor switching. The problem with a true UPS is that they lose energy to heat because they use the power to charge a battery, which is run through an inverter to supply the power to your equipment, truly uninterruptible, but inefficient. In the past the greatest problem with the non-true UPS units was the switching time. Many large companies have their servers protected but they don't bother protecting the networks, printers and individual computers. I think that's changing; it's a half-assed way to do things. If the individual computers and printers are down, nobody can work anymore.

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The US violent crime rate declined 2.2 percent last year, continuing a decade-long downward trend in serious offenses, the FBI said Monday. The annual report offers no reasons for the trends, but the exhaustive statistical data provides criminologists and academics with raw material to examine. The Assault Weapons Ban expired in 2004, I wonder if that had anything to do with it? If you want to read the 538-page report, it's on the Internet.

I know, but it's raining and the air is clearing and I don't feel like telling you about what we had to go through, it was awful. After a couple of weeks, the eruption slowed and stopped. That was when we got the first real estimate of the volume of the discharge, 1,000km<sup>3</sup>. Naturally, I had to research that on my computer in my Yellowstone.pdf file. Each of Yellowstone's explosive caldera forming eruptions occurred when large volumes of rhyolitic magma accumulated at shallow levels in the Earth's crust, as little as 3 miles (5 km) below the surface. This highly viscous (thick and sticky) magma, charged with dissolved gas, then moved upward, stressing the crust and generating earthquakes. As the magma neared the surface and pressure decreased, the expanding gas

caused violent explosions. Eruptions of rhyolite have been responsible for forming many of the world's calderas, such as those at Katmai National Park, Alaska, which formed in an eruption in 1912, and at Long Valley, California.

That's all the USGS can do is monitor. They can predict eruptions by the amount of seismic activity. No, Virginia, they can't predict earthquakes, because a foreshock isn't a foreshock until after you get the really big quake like the M8.2 that hit the San Andreas Fault. With the caldera forming eruptions, the magma moves upward causing the earthquakes so it's an entirely different situation.

"What are you doing?"

"Breaking up the lava that coated my sidewalk."

"Why?"

"Why not?"

"It's a nice day to chip rocks."

"Tell it to the guys on the Chain Gang."

*ho ha ho ha  
I hear somethin'  
Sayin 'Ho ha ho ha  
Ho ha ho ha*

*Well don't you know  
That's the sound of the men  
Workin' on the chain gang  
That's the sound of the men  
Workin' on the chain gang  
All day long they're  
sayin'Ho ha ho ha  
Ho ha ho ha*

*Well don't you know  
That's the sound of the men  
Workin' on the chain gang  
That's the sound of the men  
Workin' on the chain gang*

*All day long they work so hard  
Till the sun is going' down  
Workin' on the highways and byways  
And wearing, wearing a frown*

*You hear them moanin' their lives away*

*Then you hear somebody say  
That's the sound of the men  
Workin' on the chain gang  
That's the sound of the men  
Workin' on the chain gang*

*Can't hear them sayin'  
Hmm, I'm goin' home one of these days  
I'm goin' home  
See my woman whom I love so dear  
Meanwhile I have to work right here*

*Well don't you know  
That's the sound of the men  
Workin' on the chain gang  
That's the sound of the men  
Workin' on the chain gang*

*All day long they're sayin'  
Hmm, my, my, my, my, my, my, my, my, my work is so hard  
Give me water I'm thirsty  
My, my work is so hard  
My, my, my, my, my, my, my work is so hard  
Oh ooo oh ooo, hmm*

“Knock it off! Sam Cooke you’re not.”

“You gonna shovel off your walk, Gary?”

“Are you?”

“Can I sing Sam Cooke?”

“Makes sense to me.”

I loved that and about 10,000 other songs, but only by the original artists. Sometimes that wasn't always the case, because one person would record a song and someone else would re-record it and get a bigger hit. Ever heard of *Blue Suede Shoes*? Carl Perkins... In 1956, a desperately poor and struggling Perkins wrote the song *Blue Suede Shoes* on an old potato sack. Intentionally or not, the Elvis cover stole Perkins' thunder, and he never had another Top 40 hit, even after his move to Columbia Records in 1958.

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“What are you doing with the ash?”

“Putting it in a pile so we can get someone in to haul it off.”

“What are we going to do about the alfalfa field?”

“It’s dead.”

“I know it’s dead, that’s why I asked.”

“We could rake it and try and break up the ash. Then in the spring, we’d get a new crop.”

“I don’t think so.”

“Why not, it’s a perennial?”

“Very good question, I don’t know.”

“Elizabeth honey, I’m coming to join you...”

“Shut up Clarence, that wasn’t funny. What was Red Foxx’s real name?”

“I don’t know.”

“Sanford. John Elroy Sanford. Foxx appeared to be making a comeback with the 1991 series *The Royal Family*, in which he co-starred with his long-time friend Della Reese when a fatal heart attack felled him on the set. Ironically, one of Foxx’s best-known comic bits on *Sanford and Son* was faking a heart attack and calling out to his deceased wife Elizabeth saying *this is the big one...I’m comin’ to join ya, honey*.

“How come you know so much about dead folks?”

“When I get bored, I look them up on the Internet. Sometimes when I’m writing a story, I look up someone so I can give a little background.”

“Whatever happened to Demond Wilson?”

“He became a minister and has 6 kids.”

“Wasn’t that based on an English TV show?”

“*Steptoe & Son*, which featured the exploits of a cockney junk dealer.”

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Spend a few hours with us and see if I'm making this stuff up or just reporting, obvious a bit of both. When you're a recovering alcoholic in your 60s, about the only thing you have going for you is your humor. You didn't quit drinking soon enough to keep your body from taking a dump and you sure can't go back and un-drink the booze. Got a flashlight? With good batteries and a spare bulb? Get one! Got a little spare food on the shelf? Why not? If you spring for a generator, get one that runs at 1,800rpm, it will last longer. Store a little fuel and stabilize it with a PRI product. You don't like rice? Half the world lives on rice! Don't like beans? Buy beef stew. Got a shelter? Know anyone with a basement? Find a public shelter, but avoid the Super Dome or the Convention Center in New Orleans.

There you go, you saw what it was like at the Super Dome and the Convention Center on TV, right? You'd be far better off evacuating, just don't ride on a bus full of oxygen bottles. They're going to charge the driver with murder. I didn't know he was the mechanic responsible for keeping the brakes up. I wonder if he owned the bus?

After President Bush acknowledged that Harriet E. Miers' religious beliefs were among the reasons he nominated her to the Supreme Court, White House spokesman Scott McClellan reassured reporters that the nominee's faith would play no role in her decision-making on the bench.

Understandably, liberal groups do not buy it. They fear that, if confirmed, Miers' evangelical Christian faith would dictate her rulings. In particular, they are concerned that the president's acknowledgment of his nominee's evangelism was his way of signaling her opposition to a constitutional right to an abortion as established in *Roe vs. Wade*. They view religious affiliation solely as a proxy for ideology. (Pravda West)

Bzzzzz. *Roe v. Wade* represents a Constitution Right to Privacy, which leads to the right to have an abortion, if you choose because it's none of the government's damned business. Clarence Thomas stopped an abortion for an inmate in Missouri, but the Court overturned his stay.

We hold these truths to be self-evident:

That all men are created equal; **that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness**; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. **But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to re-**

**duce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.** Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity, which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

That's what started the whole thing. Remember? The Constitution didn't come along until later. We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and **secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity**, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. Why do You have a right to tell a woman what She can do with Her body? I know that I don't, even if I disagree with Her choice.

What most of us do, unfortunately, is ignore the parts we don't like. Take the guy who burns the Flag in protest. If I shoot him, I'm going to jail, period. How can we limit our basic rights? Maybe I should just slap him upside the head and reduce the charge to Assault and Battery. Then the jerk will sue and own the house, especially if you happen to live in California. I'd better stick to slandering him; he has to prove special damages. I can express an opinion that his parents weren't married when he was born or that he has his head where the sun doesn't shine.

Time to end the tale. If you survive a disaster, and you have even a minimum of preparations, you'll probably make it. I'm probably preaching to the choir, but who else would listen? You saw New Orleans; do you still think that having a 7-day supply of necessities is enough? I don't!

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